The Process of Public Artwork as a Means of Reconciliation in Urban Areas of Conflict

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I. Introduction and Statement of Purpose

"*Public art isn't a hero on a horse anymore"* (Raven, 1993, 1). The wheel of public artwork has been reinvented in the past half century. Challenged and expanded, the genre has revealed an alluring capacity for community engagement—one swiftly employed by artist activists. This new and explicit goal to stimulate civic dialogue has in turn uprooted traditional art processes largely concerned with personal self-expression or adherence to standards of aesthetics. With critical engagement from the community at the core of artists' goals, experimentation with the arts' location, project planning and the role of citizen participation has emerged. Escaping definitive classification and encouraging debate, community-based art endeavors executed in the public sphere appear to be a locus of potential social progress. I propose that this genre of public artwork can be employed as a reconciliatory mechanism in response to community conflict. Specifically, my supposition will center on underserved urban communities in the United States.

My investigation is currently designed around the discussion topics of site location, contested ownership of public space and management of community dialogue. I will demonstrate the complexity of site-specificity by tracking how artists or citizens determine the location of a work, the historical relationship of the space to the artist or message, and if the location has an impact on the art product. Second, I will be utilizing the symbiotic relationship between public space and public art, declaring the impact of community ownership integral to the success of the overall attempt towards social progress. Finally, my argument will become immersed in the didactic of community dialogue.

My methodology will deconstruct these points through the presentation and analysis of five case studies. Each of the studies was selected according to five criteria, detailed in a later

chapter. I have chosen these specific case studies with the intention that they carry a range of experiences without compromising a similar thread of concerns and conflicts surrounding underserved communities. My aim is to elaborate on the shared issues, successes and methods within the five case studies in order to delineate a model of action. I chose case studies as an avenue for analysis because, first, I wanted to ground my assumptions and statements in visual narratives. Second, because the works were placed in the public realm and responded to by residents as well as art critics, I felt that historical examples would be the most accurate survey of this rich dialogue.

When asked if site-specific public art is a “lesser” art because it tends to be more literal than abstracted, artist Dimitri Gerakaris responded, “I think one of the tests of really great placemaking art is this: if you see the work in its new context, and then imagine it being removed, will that place be diminished?” (Flemming, 2007, 371). Gerakaris’ comment highlights the symbiotic relationship between public art and public space inherent to my theoretical analysis. I will be considering how to define public space, how to determine and value communal ownership over that space, and how these boundaries play into the collaborative process of public art creation.

A review of the historical birth of public art in the United States according to the progression of governmental art programs, starting with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal, is important for understanding the foundations for these case analyses. By the 1960s, “the ability of art to enhance public spaces such as plazas, parks, and corporate headquarters was quickly recognized as a way to revitalize inner cities, which were beginning to collapse under the burden of increasing social problems” (as cited in Lacy, 1995, 21). Public artists were not entirely satisfied with the role of “decorator,” which they felt exploited their art for sheer

aesthetic purpose. From this dissatisfaction, urban beautification evolved into the realm of social justice. Public art was re-framed as a platform for reaching and involving the general population. When did artists see the opportunity to move beyond bronze statues and stone fountains traditionally found in urban landscapes? When did impoverished neighborhoods become a theoretical blank canvas, when before artists desired their canvas to be displayed in museums? Understanding the evolution of this thought process will clarify how the public sphere can be a vehicle for art activism. Patricia C. Philips aptly captures this viewpoint when she writes, "Public art is about the free field--the play--of creative vision. The point is not just to produce another thing for people to admire, but to create an opportunity-a situation-that enables viewers to look back at the world with renewed perspectives and clear angles of vision" (as cited in Lacy, 1995, 70). Artists wanted to do more than create art as if for a museum setting, and then simply place it outside – this would be ignoring the unique nuances of the public sphere. They wanted a separate doctrine for public art that was responsive to the needs and dynamics of public space.

Omitting for a moment the conversation about the institutional and economic strings attached to contemporary art production, one is left with a reality of a citizen who is impacted directly and possibly daily by public artwork. "Public art, since it is on the street…meets an uninformed and unwilling general public" (Mary Jane Jacob as cited in Lacy, 1995, 50). This raises the question of how much power should be allotted to the involuntary public audience base in determining the boundaries of what is considered appropriate or offensive. Achieving social change translates to challenging the established norm, which ultimately invites controversy. When debate over an art project arises, a third party may be called upon to neutralize discussion

between the artist and the community. Assuming that the artist did not anticipate rejection, the scenario at play is most likely one of misapplied intention versus actual impact.

In the case that community members do not claim ownership over their environment, the process of community artwork may have potential to alter this attitude. Marginalized communities without empowerment or precedence of invited participation could find an outlet for recognition of their concerns. An art process utilized by community artists that requires residents' theoretical input as well as their physical labor gives participants a sense of responsibility for their environment, a sense of belonging and ownership. From the direct investment of this time and energy comes a project that is a point of pride in the community, "community art seems to call for a new aesthetic, an aesthetics of collaboration…what is, perhaps, unprecedented is the twentieth-century community artists' prior awareness and conscious rejection of an aesthetics based solely on the myth of the individual genius" (Gude, 1989, 323).

The motivation for selecting a specific site on which to construct an art piece has many different story lines across public art projects. The history of a momentous incident on the site, or perhaps a less tangible connection such as an ideal combination of light and space, could motivate an artist towards his or her choice. On the other hand, it may be that the artist is commissioned for the project after the site is known, in which case it would have been a particular constituency who chose it. The latter can change the artistic dimensions of the project from its inception.

In the practice of activist public artwork, community dialogue is so essential to the definition that it can almost be best understood as a consideration on par with the color palette.

This is a distinguishing characteristic from other art movements and, whether reflected in the art product or integral in the art process, dialogue is a foundational component in the genre of public art. Artists venturing towards community art must recognize the difficulty in balancing community dialogue about the artwork with their own opinions, “The challenge is to facilitate movement from ‘my personal story’ to a deeper understanding of collective implications, to a capacity for communication in a diverse public realm, to civic dialogue. From expressing being heard, and hearing in return. From sharing to contributing” (Korza, 2002, 10). In the same vein, there is a balance that must be achieved, or the risk of masking the artists’ voice shifts to a reality (Korza, 2002). The artist must still be elevated as a conductor of the project orchestration, drawing the line between being an artist and being a mouthpiece, in order to ensure that the bottom line of art creation is accomplished.

Returning briefly to the necessary inclusion of community dialogue for the genre, it is common for artists to fail to instigate the response they expected or desired. This raises a common issue plaguing public artists – do artists need to be a part of the community they are representing? In other words, what is the significance of an insider versus outsider community perspective? Most especially in the context of intimately personal or traumatic experiences, facilitation is an exigent task and the leap between artwork and discourse particular to every audience. I believe expectations are multiplied for public artists because of potential of their work for social progress, “Art can humanize civic issues, bringing forward the human impact and implications. Often this is an emotional journey and it can be difficult to switch from the intense emotion of the artistic experience to that rational response expected in civic discourse” (Korza, 2002, 10).

The goal of my study has been to explore the possibilities for public artwork to be used as a source of reconciliation and positive community social change. I have learned that in each case study analysis, attention paid to all overlapping spheres of influence, including artist, community, institution and location, consistently affect the variables of success.

II. Historical Context of Public Artwork

From marble statutes idealizing the physique of Roman emperors to stately presidents immortalized in stone atop Capitol Hill, monumental art has historically enjoyed prime real estate in visual culture. Traditionally, the objective of art placed within the public sphere was to enhance the reputations or legacies of members of the elite class (Knight, 2008, 2). Public art was in this sense a potent imaging tool. Monuments could be commissioned by those in power to reinforce their political or social control. Around the turn of the twentieth century in the United States, public artwork found a new job description in urban beautification initiatives. Branching out from statuary and monuments, the national government systemized support for public art projects through several federal programs. In this paper the term public artwork refers to art in a public setting operating through these governmental means or in reaction to them. Public art is used to describe creative art products intended for public consumption and community interaction. The use of the term public artwork in this paper is not meant to incorporate that of memorials or monuments.

The influx of fiscal support from government art programs starting at the time of the New Deal was intended to bolster social capital in the United States. The rationale followed that by bringing artwork formerly found in museums outdoors, urban eyesores would be enhanced at the same time that American citizens received a government sponsored gift of "equal" access to fine art. It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that artists began to declare a difference between simply placing artwork in the public sphere and creating truly "public artwork." These artists challenged the notion that a work of art earned the title of public art solely from an outdoor location. They cited lessons learned from controversies surrounding unwanted public artwork to formulate the idea that community engagement in the creative

process determined a work's success and longevity. As the following paragraphs will argue, their intellectual development of public art as a theory and genre can be traced in the progression of federal art programs.

History of Government Art Initiatives: The Trickle-Down of Cultural Capital

In 1933 the "Public Works of Art Project" (PWAP) marked the first step in a new era of government-sponsored support for public art projects in the United States. More specifically, it acted as a forerunner for Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal revitalization efforts. A relatively small project at its start, PWAP commissioned professional artists to produce works for public buildings (Knight, 2008). By 1935 its efforts had already been absorbed into a model of financial distribution, under a new title of the Federal Art Project (FAP). FAP focused on providing subsidized jobs for unemployed artists on relief. It was one of three major art divisions included in the New Deal's Works Progress Administration program. It was unique in the freedom afforded to artists under its jurisdiction. While the director of the short-lived PWAP, Edward Bruce, had been an artist himself, translating his technical ability to a harsh review of selected artists, the acting director of FAP, Holger Cahill, placed much less emphasis on judging applicants. As a result, art produced with FAP funding tended to be much more experimental and unconventional than the PWAP had been (Knight, 2008).

The other two WPA art initiatives mentioned fell under the umbrella of the Treasury Department. The Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) commissioned works for federally owned buildings. A large percentage of chosen artists were on relief, but this was not a requirement. The third WPA program was briefly named the Section of Painting and Sculpture before transitioning to the title Section of Fine Arts. The Section dually commissioned work for specialized projects and hosted art competitions open to American citizens (Knight, 2008). The

idea behind the competitions was to discover previously unknown artistic talents. The artists applying through the Section were not granted commissions according to financial needs however, as was the case for FAP.

Americans initially struggled to digest the government's new role in the art sphere. Other countries, such as England, through the British Art Council, had certainly intervened in the development of public art, but it was a novel concept for the United States (Hein, 2006). Furthermore, New Deal art tended to focus on scenes and sentiments of the community and of daily life, whereas the previous centuries' art had emphasized statuary and memorials. To make matters more confusing to the general public, many of the WPA grants were given to, "women, people of color and self-taught artists" (Hein, 2006, 71). These innovations, combined with apprehension about the government's objective, led some citizens to questions the WPA programs' success. Nonetheless, the bottom line was the large volume of art produced, "from 1933 to 1943 thousands of artists produced over a hundred thousand artworks under the patronage of the American government" (Knight, 2008, 3).

The WPA programs were eliminated in 1943 in favor of budgetary needs for the war effort. In retrospect, whether the New Deal initiatives represented a sincere gesture by the federal government towards supporting art efforts, or whether they were purely a financially sound decision to restore stability in citizens' bank accounts is unclear. Political influences are not hard to delineate in New Deal artwork. Popular themes include nationalism and economic security, the latter being far from an accurate portrayal of the economic hardship of the decade (Knight, 2008). Yet, it is more likely that the impetus for establishing such programs came from both practical and visionary thought processes. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the New Deal art projects would not be the last of their kind to come out of Capitol Hill.

Nearly twenty years after its adjournment, the Section of Fine Arts was revived and reformatted under the federal Art in Architecture program (A-i-A) in 1963. Also referred to in industry shorthand as "percent for art," A-i-A had a three-year run under the General Services Administration (GSA), the home base for federal construction projects. A-i-A dictated that approximately one half of one percent of construction costs of new federal building would go to the purchase of contemporary artwork by American artists. The percentage concept was credited to Edward Bruce, former director of the PWAP, who voiced his favor for mandated "embellishment" in federal building project budgets as early as 1934 (Knight, 2008). "Percent for art" drastically altered the role of contemporary artists by extending an invitation onto architecture and design teams – at varying levels of influence. As will be examined later, part of their resistance to this half-hearted inclusion shaped the procedures of community engagement art.

The Art in Architecture initiative was petering out by 1966, due in part to a controversial art purchase, as well as rising construction costs overall. It was reinstated in 1972 by President Nixon, but continued to be the target of critique. The A-i-A's tendency to take the architecture teams' side earned it an unfavorable reputation among the artist social network. It was accused of practicing "plop art," which inferred interchangeability between museum artists and public artists. The legacy left by A-i-A did soften these accusations, though A-i-A's choice to include artists at an early stage of construction helped to move the artist from a "glorified decorator" closer to a full project participant (Knight, 2008). This change in roles meant artists had a greater chance of impacting the art space with their art concept, as opposed to fitting a piece into an already constructed scene. To locate this transformation in art historical terms, A-i-A permitted evolution from site-sensitive art to site-specific work.

The National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) was established in 1965. It received the first federal tax-based funds for an organization of its kind, the bulk of which was intended to trickle down to state and local levels (Knight, 2002). First, the NEA set about reversing a widely held critique of A-i-A: that art had been forced into residents' living spaces without their consent or input. NEA's solution was through the creation of an Art-in-Public-Places (A-i-P-P) program, which operated via requests for artwork from communities. By 1979 the program had developed so that proposals by community members included the artist selection, the site location and maintenance of the work after completion. The NEA also required that the community who submitted the request match the funds donated by the A-i-P-P. "[A-i-P-P] projects often incorporated content relevant to their local audiences rather than addressing generalized ones, frequently offered utilitarian or rehabilitative functions, and relied upon sustained commitments from the public" (Knight, 2002, 17). The approach put forth by the NEA through the Arts-in-Public-Places program is a landmark innovation in the development of public art theory. The NEA recognized and responded to the desire for public artwork to embody the community where it was installed. As theorist Hein states, "the program initially retained the paternalistic aspect of the New Deal. However, the greater its nominal success, the greater the challenges to the premises of the program, for the myth of the generic American could not withstand confrontation with actual multiplicity" (Knight, 2002, 17). Americans had rejected "plop art" and pronounced their diversity, leaving government programs little choice but to acknowledge the need for variety in public art projects.

The NEA came under fire from conservative political factions in the 1980s to the 1990s. Tougher economic times led politicians to advocate eliminating the NEA from an overextended budget. Today the Endowment is in existence but the A-i-P-P program is not. NEA as a whole

continues to grapple with balancing public requests, institutional barriers, and an evolving artistic trajectory, "the Endowment often finds itself straddling expectations for high culture and hopes for populist appeal" (Knight, 2002, 15). In addition to A-i-P-P, NEA experimented with other programs for achieving these ends. Their Visual Arts Fellowship Program was an opportunity for those wanting to work with non-object orientated art. It was exactly this experimental nature of the fellowship that led to its demise. The program was cut in 1990 after controversial performance pieces proved too unconventional to maintain political support (Cartiere, 2008). Private foundations made up some of the slack in nurturing the burgeoning field of new genre public art. One such private donor included the Ford Foundation's Animating Democracy Initiative, whose mission statement projected sentiments of "arts-based civic dialogue" (Cartiere, 2008, 20).

Translating the federal programs into practice: What did it mean for public art?

After a brief examination of the government's role in the history of public art in the United States, it is important to analyze the impact of the programs on the field, particularly in conjunction with artists' actions. With some exception, the direct efforts of the government art programs in the twentieth century are seen as tools for urban beautification. At the same time, it is clear that these efforts mutually impacted the emerging structure of community engagement art. An example of this reciprocal influence is the progression from A-i-A's installation of works in public spaces through their own discretion, to A-i-P-P's collaboration with community systems after their presence was requested. For community members to be included in the decision-making process was a significant advance on the institutional level. The concept of the public taking part in the public art was something perpetuated by those artists who would later identify as new genre public artists or practitioners of community engagement art. There was a

two-way causal relationship at play between artists and institutions. The effects demonstrated that whether or not artists participated in government-funded programs, they were still operating within their context and drawing from their support.

Artists looking to involve themselves and their art in the public sphere were passengers on the rollercoaster development of public artwork. Intermittent successes were matched by periods of disillusionment and setbacks. For instance, during the time of "percent for art" initiatives in the 1960s, artists fought for representation on construction design teams. Their motivation to do so was that they were being commissioned for artworks after the building was complete, constricting what they could design. Many were dissatisfied with the limitations because they saw a potential for public artwork to become site-specific, or to be impacted and to impact in return the space where it would be located. Thinking that a position on the construction design team might lead to greater influence on the work itself, artists eventually requested and achieved the representation they sought at the planning table. Unfortunately, their presence at an early stage did not alter their level of control. That is, "some artists began to feel that their vision was simply absorbed into the setting, bureaucratized beyond recognition in the name of interprofessional cooperation" (Finkelpearl, 2001, 32). Artist Siah Armajani declared, "[P]ublic art was a promise that became a nightmare. Our revolution has been stolen back from us and now it is our job to get it back" (Finkelpearl, 2001, 33). Part of the reclamation process became rejection of the government proposed role of public artists. Artists were unsatisfied with creating what they deemed, "real estate architecture" or "corporate baubles," especially when they envisioned the possibilities of site-specific art that responded to, shaped and was inspired by sites (Hein, 2006, 53). Public art theorist Hilde Hein framed the tension eloquently when she said that such projects, "are public art only by linguistic courtesy" (Hein, 2006, 53).

A Matter of Power: What controversy tells us about Public Art

Public art is, by definition, inherently collective. It appears in the public sphere, unavoidable on a drive to work or consistently in the line of vision from a high-rise window. So while a community member might not be a member of the elite group dictating projects or the artistic team carrying them to completion, one may still hold an opinion about the work. For these reasons, it is not surprising that dialogue and controversy over public art has a long history, even in the United States. As early as the 19th century Davy Crockett denounced a marble sculpture of George Washington, the first piece of public art commissioned by the US government, because they had depicted him in a Roman gown. For Crockett, this depiction was an insult to Washington's memory, for he was an American, not a Roman! (Doss, 1995, 15). It is possible that contemporary versions of this complaint run deeper in source and meaning than outward appearance, as Crockett's may have as well. Doss contends, "concerns about money and aesthetics mask deeper issues of authority and autonomy in the civic sphere" (Doss, 1995, 38). Controversies over public artwork, who creates it, where it is located and the aesthetic composition, provide insight into this contested power dynamic.

In effect, the heart of the debate about art in the public sphere can be framed as a discussion about power. Power relationships between artists and design teams embody power relationships between art and politics, elite classes and the masses. Erica Doss explains this, "today's public sphere…has become a contested site of cultural authority as artists, art agencies, politicians and corporations vie for public favor and power. Public art discourse—debates, petitions, hearings, media accounts, artists' statements, political proceedings, and the art-making process itself—discloses widespread American concern with this struggle for cultural, and social,

control" (Doss, 1995, 15). Purging this conflict to succeed at civic-dialogue-based art first requires recognition of it.

To achieve its current form, the definition of public art has endured false starts and new beginnings. In the process of maturing from its most basic definition of art plucked from a museum setting and placed within the public sphere, public art leaned on an array of persons and institutions. Artists, theorists, critics, citizens, and politicians all had a hand in public art development. Ultimately, it was the personal relationships and dialogue exchanges between them that helped to shape and construct the field. Artist and writer Suzanne Lacy reflects, "Those of us who began our work in the 1970s look with bemusement on the increasing interest process-based public art has attracted. What was, in the early 1990s, a network based on friendships, similar values, and a knowledge of each other's practice, can today more plausibly be called a "field," or at least intersecting forms of practice, with support by major funders, applications in education, and a body of critical research" (Cartiere, 2008, 19).

As decades passed, and government programs developed and dissolved, the roles of public art participants only became more complicated. It is clear that the government funding provided a genesis of creation, and that each public art display contributed in some way to our current understanding of public artistry. The current state of affairs is captured by Hein, "I distinguish between "public art," which, I hold, constructs a public, and "art in public places," which, while it may have public value, is characterized chiefly in virtue of its location and bureaucratic legitimization" (Hein, 2006, 53).

III. Research Plan and Procedures

Methods of Selection

The following pages describe the criteria that guided my case study selection. The purpose of the case studies was to illuminate threads of theory and practice in public artworks that are exemplary of the field and insightful for planning future projects. Knowledge drawn from the case studies contributed to a proposed theory around the possibility of using public artwork to reconcile social conflict within communities.

The final selections represent an attempt to distinguish new creative processes guided by the artistic reclaiming of urban space in the past half-century. While the artists and projects run across a spectrum of individuals, theories and products, there are five facets they all share that have ultimately legitimated their inclusion in this paper.

1. The case studies are located in an urban area in the United States.
2. The artworks selected are temporary, and this relationship with impermanence is integral to the works' intention and impact.
3. The case studies are focused on the art *process* as a primary axis for achieving engagement art, valuing the structure of the creative process over the final product in terms of achieving social change.
4. The works chosen set a precedent for future public artwork.
5. Each of the artists developed a theoretical framework to accompany their work that is currently available to the public for review, or which was described in a public presentation (*e.g.* information on the Mural Crew was drawn from a November 18, 2009 lecture by Schork at Tufts University.)

The first criterion states that the chosen art projects are carried out in an urban area within the United States. My case studies are located in Los Angeles, New York, Boston and Chicago. The choice to filter case studies to the United States was a decision based on the need to limit variables for the sake of later comparisons between case studies. It was beyond the scope of my research to provide the amount of information necessary for an appropriate historical analysis of the development of the field. By limiting the cases to American cities, I am able to contextualize my argument in the history of American governmental art programs as well as concurrent social movements. In that vein, artists' reactions and inclusion in the varying stages of American government arts funding became a clear marker in their work. I found that whether responding to the strict guidelines set by the "percent for art" program or to the availability of funding leading up to a reoccurring installation, public artists in the United States should be analyzed in conjunction with federal and local levels of institutional exposure.

I decided to focus solely on urban environments because of their inherent link to reoccurring tensions in the public art sphere. In a densely populated metropolitan area, if a public artwork is installed, then it is viewed daily by large quantities of people. This implies both the capacity for positively impacting a large quantity of people and a matching capacity for garnering a lot of negative response. My later analysis delves into a discussion about the ownership of public space, which is a debate heightened by the close quarters of urban living. Urban locations also invited questioning of institutional involvement through government funding and commissions, as well as conversations about urban beautification as a separate sphere from community engagement artwork. I felt it important to address through my case studies that art critics have regarded public art commissions as a band-aid for urban eyesores. The criterion of an urban location, even beyond the high visibility factor and contested role as a

"facelift" in public art, furthered my research goal because urban centers have historically borne the brunt of social conflicts. City landscapes in the United States are microcosms of larger social movements and critical injustices. They have served as a meeting ground for marches, a listening space for speeches and a site for demonstrations.

The length of the installation and the time period of creation were also considered in the criteria. All of the projects had varying lengths of installation. When investigating whether the process is paramount to the product, the length of the installation became a significant issue for discussion. For example, less emphasis may be placed on keeping the product maintained if the artist considers the process by which it is created to be more significant. Questions of maintenance are pressing concerns for public artworks placed in outdoor spaces. Temporality in public works is markedly different than museum paintings, which are bought and sold over the course of hundreds of years. The "indoor" works of art may be more attractive to collectors due to its capacity to immortalize one's name. Public art cannot offer this permanence, yet can still demand a significant price tag. Furthermore, efforts to preserve an art piece outdoors only add to the budgetary requirements. In turn, this raises the question of the changing role of artists who are pressured to take on the functions of a fundraiser or community organizer to ensure an art piece's longevity.

Included in my analysis of the artists' use of time is consideration of the calendar time period. Large-scale social changes such as the Civil Rights Movement occurred in the broader public sphere from the 1960's to the present in the United States. The waves of progress were reflected in the art world, where female artists and artists of color received more attention and access to professional institutes. Artwork produced also became more critically engaged with social commentary and the interests of marginalized communities.

The primacy of the art process over the art product illustrated in the five case studies was the initial inspiration for my thesis investigation. The community engagement techniques and theoretical framework defining these case studies are done with empowerment of the place and population in mind. Each artist was engaged philosophically with the capacity for public artwork and social change, and this personal orientation visibly informed their work. This was important for the case studies as a filter because my ultimate goal was to comprehend the value and successful application of a public art process that "works" in the eye of the artist and community, regardless of the value attached by art critics.

All of the case studies have set a precedent in the public art field whether by content, process or medium. Selecting from thousands of public artworks created over the past fifty years, I believe these criteria aided in the selection of exemplary works. The way in which each case study achieves this status will be explained in the following chapter.

Finally, each case study had a formal dialogue put forth by the artist that is available to the public in written form, or in the case of the Boston Mural Crew, through a public presentation (Schork, Tufts University, 18 Nov 2009). To accurately bring together my own suppositions with public art theory, I used the artists' own writings and words concerning their artwork.

The criteria put forth in my methods of selection for the case studies underscore key concepts in the ongoing public art debate. From the significance of urban centers as a site location, to the range of temporality and its subsequent impact on the meaning of the art piece, these criteria supply a foundation for the analysis.

Criteria and Rationale for Selection

The following section will explain how each case study conforms to the five criteria. I will briefly touch upon how each case study utilizes aspects of time and permanence, the artists' concern with the creative process and community engagement, the precedent the case study represents in the public art timeline, and the type of primary source information available.

The Great Wall of Los Angeles, Judith Baca

Judith Baca's *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* was created and installed in the urban, American location of Los Angeles, California. While intended as a permanent installation, the mural has endured some seasonal damage in its thirty-four year existence. Taking into account its singularity and fame-- the *Great Wall* is one of the longest murals in the world and is considered a cultural landmark in California-- it will not likely disappear from the landscape anywhere in the near future. However the "permanence" of Baca's mural project does call into question a shared responsibility for maintenance of public artworks, and the idea of accounting for this maintenance in the budget.

Baca's execution of *The Great Wall* started the same year the National Endowment for the Arts, the umbrella foundation for the Arts-in-Public-Places program, officially altered its guidelines for public artwork to be "appropriate to the immediate site" (Kwon, 2002, 65). The change reflected the surge in public art discourse demanding explicit connections between the location of a public art piece and the work itself, a sentiment interpreted as converse to "plop art" or "object-off-the-pedestal" practices. Baca's aversion to the latter mentality stems from her wariness of what she deemed a, "things go down better with public art" approach that she argues developers exploit during urbanization and subsequent gentrification (Lacy, 1995, 132). *The*

Great Wall reacted to the challenge of developing meaning congruent to the site, setting a precedent in the content of the mural's panels. Baca chose to narrate Los Angeles' history from a historical perspective often omitted from contemporary history textbooks by focusing on the experiences of women and minorities from pre-history to the 1960s in California. Currently, Judith Baca and accompanying organization SPARC are in negotiations to expand the visual timeline and add panels for historical events from the 1960s to the present day.

Integral to my investigation was exploring how artists elevate the creative process to operate as a tool of community engagement. Baca approached this goal through the organizational structure of *The Great Wall* project. Approximately four hundred teenagers from surrounding communities participated in the creation of *The Great Wall* (Doss, 1995). Some of the youth were on probation or belonged to area gangs. Baca structured their participation so that in addition to artistic training, the youth received career instruction and drug counseling. Moreover, the youths were specifically placed in teams of mixed ethnic races and geographic addresses and, on Friday mornings attended seminars about the racial history of Los Angeles. Baca constructed a course of action for achieving the art product that reached far beyond the product itself.

I selected Baca in part because of the readily available primary resource narratives written about *The Great Wall*. As an artist, art activist, art critic and historical writer, Judith Baca's adaptation of community-based engagement art and her numerous essays about the work during and after project completion and about the field of public art in general provided documentation for the analysis.

The Boston Mural Crew, Heidi Schork

The Boston Mural Crew currently operates out of the Mayor's Office of Art and Cultural Development in Boston, Massachusetts. The Crew has produced upwards of sixty murals of differing scales and details in the past two decades, and some only live on in photographs. Director Heidi Schork's collection of murals have a more impermanent scope than Judith Baca's *Great Wall*, in part because murals require costly upkeep and the Crew has produced so many. In addition, the reality of urban life means unpredictable demolition and construction.

The learning process of participation on the Mural Crew became more significant for participants than the critique of the murals upon completion. Schork focused the direction of the work program on a therapeutic component of the Crew. She selected her employees by looking for "kids who need to be part of something with a successful end result" (Schork, Tufts University, 18 Nov 2009). Alumni of the program range from former inmates to victims of abuse, many of who have found direction and comfort in the structure and camaraderie of the Crew, stability in the paycheck it provided, and confidence-boosting pride in the finished product. This aspect of the Crew supersedes the ultimate aesthetic product in the eyes of the Muralists, though the murals impact the community space in a positive manner as well.

Schork's Mural Crew set an institutional model among city sponsored work programs. The Crew's incorporation into the city government did put restrictions on the art content, but it also became an opportunity for Schork to systemize the program. Her model of integration into a support system such as the Mayor's Office is responsible for the longevity of the initiative, and has been replicated in other city settings.

Police Plaza Sculpture Project, John Ahearn

John Ahearn was an active artist member of the South Bronx, New York community. When local residents protested his sculpture design for the South Bronx Police Plaza, their discontent came as a surprise to the Ahearn, the unofficial artist in residence. By further exploring the development of events and the context leading up to the sculptures removal, one is able to glimpse the precarious timing of the process that contributed to its demise.

Ahearn's concern with process is reflected in his choice of medium and procedure. The intimate process of life casting and his practice of an open studio was a welcome invitation for the community he aimed to befriend and elevate through his artwork. In some respects, Ahearn stood as a bridge between the elitist art world and the isolated blocks of the South Bronx. Ahearn's Police Plaza sculpture project set a precedent for how public artwork would be commissioned and overseen, as well as for how an artist could behave with the interests of the community in mind during controversy.

Dwellings, Charles Simonds

Charles Simonds granted New York City access to the fruits of his artistic labors during a long-term foray into the concept of *Dwellings*. In a similar vein to the Mural Crew's continuous production, Simonds played with the line between temporary and permanent by creating short-lived structures steadily over time. Between 1971 and 1982 Simonds had constructed approximately three hundred miniature clay buildings (Sandler, 1997). Made from unfired clay and delicately constructed with tweezers, the Dwellings were often destroyed by natural elements. Simonds' motivation for this impermanence was his attempt to escape the consumerist culture of museums institutions. Interestingly, he would later host an exhibit at the Whitney Museum in New York.

For Simonds, the process of creation led to an unexpected product outside of his art pieces. Among other reactions to *Dwellings*, one outcome was the construction of a children's park in the area. This project was prompted after children took primary interest in Simonds when he sculpted the clay buildings. Children adored the miniatures that were located at their eyesight level and matched their small scale. His constant presence outdoors calls to mind the work of muralist Heidi Schork and the Mayor's Mural Crew. It was through these interactions that Simonds came to recognize the need for youth play space in the community, and what led him to political engagement.

Simonds set a precedent in his attempted operation outside of the art sphere. His anthropological approach to the fantasized culture of *Dwellings'* residents was a novel approach to critical social justice commentary. He penned a companion in-depth story line for the *Dwellings*, which he claimed were formerly occupied by a population deemed "Little People." The background information on the "Little People" included their religion, sociology and history. According to Simonds, the race had been wiped out by urban civilization. In this light, Simonds' art experiment can be interpreted as an introspective comment on the social construct of communities at the time, since a large majority of the *Dwellings* were concentrated in the Lower East Side, then an underserved area of New York City.

"Culture in Action: New Public Art in Chicago," Mary Jane Jacob

"Culture in Action: New Public Art in Chicago" was a summer long installation in Chicago, Illinois in 1993. From gardens to health centers, to boulders and video footage, curator Mary Jane Jacob tested the limits of what could be considered art through her selection of eight varied projects. The timeline of the exhibit, five months, versus the timeline of some of the art

products within it, such as the health center that could have provided services indefinitely, highlights a mismatch in the activist art. Ultimately, while “Culture in Action” only had funding for its intended five months, the goals of the exhibit’s components did not seem to be operating on such an abbreviated scale. This disjoint complicated the budget and even jeopardized the achievement of the exhibits that had potential to become permanent community structures.

At its core, “Culture in Action” was a deliberate move to reject the conventionalized relationship between public artist and architectural team, as the exhibit put the community as the main collaborating partner with the artist. “Jacob’s desire to shift the role of the viewer from passive spectator to active art-maker become one of the central goals of ‘Culture in Action’” (Kwon, 2002, 103). It was a radical step that would set a precedent for future new-genre public artists. It was also a heavily critiqued decision due to later revelations of the contrived relationship between outsider artists and Chicago residents.

Jacobs’ “Culture in Action” lives on in a literature accompanying the exhibit and developed by the curator herself. One is able to view the exhibit as Jacobs intended, while reading about the collaborating artists’ dialogues and visitors’ impressions.

Plan for Analysis

The goal of the analysis was to illuminate contributing factors of an effective public art campaign. I wanted to understand how aspects of a project, such as the relationship of the artist to the community base or the structure of the installation, altered the impact of the artwork before and after its completion. Each of my selected case studies has been analyzed with this end in mind. I chose to structure my analysis on three distinct points of inquiry, with specific case studies applied to each section. They are as follows:

1. Significance of location

   Judith Baca, The Great Wall of Los Angeles (1974-1979)

   Heidi Schork, Boston Mayor's Mural Crew (1991-present)

2. Discussion of communal ownership

   John Ahearn, Various works produced 1970's-1990's with focus on Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha (1996)

   Charles Simonds, Dwellings (1970's)

3. Managing community dialogue

   Mary Jane Jacob, Culture in Action: New Public Art in Chicago (1993)

The division is not to say that the case studies were explored in a singular realm of thought, as there is considerable overlap in theory between the category headings. Characteristics that were analyzed in all of the case studies include the structure of the art process, the medium selected, the intent and role of the artist, and the community response. From these elements, I attempted to filter meaningful conversations around modern debates in public artwork.

First, I was interested in exploring the extent to which site location, geographical or immaterial, impacted the artwork produced. I selected all urban site locations so that the caliber of their exposure was comparable and each piece was guaranteed to have had a certain audience mass. More so than viewership quantity, I wanted to analyze the connection between the history of the physical space and the content of the artwork, as contributing to the overall meaning. The channel wall where Judy Baca's mile long mural is painted has been credited with partitioning

Los Angeles into ethnic neighborhoods. In a move that can be perceived as recompense for their actions, the U.S. Army Corps approached Baca to use the channel wall they had installed for a public mural. Baca's choice to engage with forgotten histories of minorities in the mural's narrative seemed to further underscore the historical significance of the wall in Los Angeles ethnic dialogue.

The channel wall is also ideal with respect to visibility. Persons making use of the skate path and park newly planted along the mural could view it in close detail, or it could be appreciated from a distance on one's way to work along Coldwater Canyon Avenue. This high visibility in the public realm is a paramount distinction between the public and private realm in terms of artwork, and it seemed to be what further elevates Baca's public piece to the status of a change agent. Both considerations of past history and current accessibility were points of entry for analysis of the *Great Wall*.

Engaging with a conception of why location is important for public art resonates particularly from a governmental perspective. The antiquated bureaucratic model of "progress" in urban communities, classically intertwined with bulldozers and high-rise offices, has historically translated to the uprooting of ethnic community bases. Public artwork is perceived by developers as a quick fix to appease critics. Not only in new construction, but in existing urban eyesores as well, politicians and administrative figures have looked to public artwork for this particular brand of aesthetic band-aid. Urban beautification came into vogue particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, subsequently adding public artwork to construction checklists as the norm. Heidi Schork and the Mural Crew's ties to the Mayor in Boston certainly imply inclusion in this genre of urban beautification initiatives. Yet labeling the Crew as such tends to detract from other aspects of their projects that did in fact transcend aesthetics. Schork is clear in her

delineation of the urban renewal aspect of her work and the deeper community-learning component. It is the latter that I evaluated when I considered the role of location in the Mural Crew's rapport.

Public artwork has the capacity to be inescapable visually, a trait both beneficial if the piece is well received or equally as tragic if the public does not condone the image invasion. I examined how the artist chose to define their target viewers, admitting the impossibility of pleasing the entire public, which, defined broadly, encompasses an inconceivable diversity. At the same time, the artist needs to avoid oversimplifying their definition of a target community. There is a diversity that needs to be recognized within each notion of a community, an issue that I investigated in John Ahearn's bronze sculpture experience. John Ahearn's work grapples with these insider and outsider partitions along defining community lines. Ultimately, his sculptures were rejected because race was how community was being defined in the South Bronx, not zip code (which Ahearn shared). I evaluated this exclusion in comparison to the "Richard Serra perspective," charging how much public artists should have to please the varied public audience, or even take into account their creative suggestions, for their public artwork to operate effectively.

New public artists worked hard to escape the self-selected audience found in the safe space of museum settings. This audience was primarily those with the cultural capital to operate in the art world. The ability to pay for museum entrance, having free time to expend, and possessing the art historical background for a comprehensive visit makes museum goers a distinct subset of general society. I looked at how Charles Simonds interacted with the economic portion of the art sphere, in addition to his efforts to operate outside of the art institution. Furthermore, I considered both Simonds' and Ahearn's work according to how their projects

were intended to assist community empowerment, and if elements such as self-detachment from the art sphere or inclusion in the target community affected this ability.

I utilized the eight projects included in Mary Jane Jacobs' "Culture in Action" exhibit to probe several primary questions about sustaining community dialogue in public artworks. Paramount to the discussion was the limitations on the definition of a public artwork, and if it could stand up to dematerialization without crossing over into social work. I dissected how effectively Jacob and the participating artists cultivated community dialogue. This brought me to reflect on the artist's changing role in new genre public art endeavors. Mary Jane Jacob seems to recognize the differences in her requests and expectations of participating artists in the "Culture in Action" exhibit. For example, challenging the commissioned artists to operate a hydroponic garden under the umbrella of an art exhibition.

The increasing stress placed on nurturing community dialogue appeared to parallel a trend toward dematerialization in artwork. Several projects in "Culture in Action" would not necessarily have been categorized as artwork unless they were framed in the exhibit context. Patricia C. Philips states, "a growing number of artists and agencies believe that the responsibility of public artists is not to create permanent objects for presentation in traditionally accepted public places but, instead, to assist in the construction of the public—to encourage, through actions, ideas, and interventions, a participatory audience where none seemed to exist" (Lacy, 1995, 67). I attempted to draw out the implementation of this perspective in my study of "Culture in Action."

With regard to my analysis of community response, I also attempted to assess the balance between abstraction and readability in the "real world" versus the "art world." A fairly common

critique of public artwork is that the storyline or style is the victim of simplification to ensure mass readability. Cartiere and Willis comment that, “there seems to be an unspoken consensus in the fine art establishment that public art is synonymous with compromise, dilution and dependency” (Cartiere, 2008, 1). Yet I deliberated the merits of this argument, for if that approach makes the symbolism clear to the general public then it might still be deemed successful. This ties into consideration of whether or not artwork should be permitted to remain in the public sphere if it is widely misinterpreted. If the artists’ intent is not decipherable or their artwork is construed as offensive, the prospect of its removal is strengthened.

IV. Case Study Analysis

Judith Baca, The Great Wall of Los Angeles

Judith Baca's *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* is clear in its assertion of the artist's individual persona as well as its intended impact. Judith Baca was born in southern California in 1949, the second generation of a Mexican-American family (Doss, 1995). She partly credits her community-inclusive approach in public artwork to the empathetic nature of her family, who stressed social awareness throughout her youth. When Baca studied art at a collegiate level, she also chose to minor in history and education (Doss, 1995). This decision alone illuminates the breadth of perspectives incorporated into her work beyond that of artistic technical work. She writes a revolutionized history of urban development in the United States by calling on her own academic foundation, artistic skill set and personal vision of an active community climate. In the *Great Wall*, Baca labels her problem in the wall's content and frames her solution in the structure of its creative contributors, the projects' Mural Makers.

The Cultural Affairs Division of Los Angeles hired Baca as resident fine artist following her graduation in 1969. She promptly set to work organizing rival area gangs in mural art projects. Her efforts contributed to the foundation of the city of Los Angeles' first mural initiative, the Citywide Mural Project, in 1974. The non-profit organization dedicated itself to bringing mural art to the walls of urban Los Angeles, at the time battling both ambitious urban development and accelerating rates of crime. The Mural Project rapidly matured under its umbrella organization, SPARC, the Social and Public Art Resource Center, which Baca would later direct. SPARC was a community arts center that utilized varied art mediums to further the work of social movements. This interest in a spectrum of media is echoed by the three founders'

primary crafts: Donna Deitch, a filmmaker, Judith Baca, a muralist and Christina Schlesinger, a painter (SPARC).

It was through SPARC that the *Great Wall* mural project was initiated. Baca was directing the organization at the time, and was approached by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to facilitate the project. The Corps already had the site location in mind: the Tujunga Wash Flood Control Channel. Inspired by a devastating flood in 1938 and mandated into existence by the Flood Control Act of 1941, the channel cut through the Los Angeles River. By the 1970s the Corps set about revitalizing the surrounding land of the channel that had been subjected to flooding, in spite of the channel's intent to impede it. Their plan aimed to turn the area surrounding the channel into parks and bike paths, whereas the proposed murals could be viewed both by users of the space, and by those driving by on the parallel Coldwater Canyon Avenue.

When approached with the Corps' proposal, Baca quickly recognized a dimension of the site beyond its high visibility attributes. The channel had splintered Los Angeles into distinctly separate neighborhoods that in turn developed as segregated ethnic enclaves. As time passed, these alienated pockets of neighborhoods would develop at unequal rates and, worst yet, they would become pitted against one another in the struggles of resource distribution. Baca aimed to illustrate this unintended consequence of urbanization in her design of the *Great Wall*. This historical narrative was to begin as early as the natives of California, and the primary lens of storytelling was adjusted to reflect Baca's perspective as a female, Chicana citizen. She would tell the story previously untold in the schema of American history by focusing on a minority perspective.

The Mexican mural movement played a large role in Baca's mural aesthetic. In the wake of the Mexican civil war in the 1920s, the newly instated people's government of Mexico launched a muralist art campaign to help construct a national identity (Baca, 2004). The murals captured sentiments of the revolution and a renewed social consciousness. This message was distributed in an egalitarian form that reflected the government's policies. The mural movement's leading artists, José Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, were known as Los Tres Grandes, or the Three Great Muralists. These artists were all deliberate in their goals of inclusion, "the Mexican muralists were neither artistically nor intellectually isolated from Mexican society" (Rochfort, 1993, 7). Siqueiros brought the mural ideal to Los Angeles in 1932 with "American Tropical," which depicted the exploitation of Mexican workers in California. In the 1960s and 1970s, murals continued to function within social movements in Los Angeles. Guerilla mural painting, meaning works not commissioned by government factions, provided a political voice for citizens whose venues of expression were closed off. When Mexican American parents could not hold a seat on the School Board, they could critique education policy through a mural instead (Baca, 2004). Baca connected with the legacy of the Mexican mural movement and the behavior of Los Tres Grandes. "The Mexican muralists' principal objective was not pictorial innovation, associated with so much of the twentieth-century Western painting. The muralists' point of departure and primary concern was for a public and accessible visual dialogue with the Mexican people" (Rochfort, 1993, 7). Moving forward with SPARC to design *The Great Wall*, Baca chose to echo the aesthetics and structure of Mexican muralist projects.

The aesthetic layout of the *Great Wall* calls to mind the information-driven nature of a history textbook. Images in the mural are partitioned similar to a movie reel, as each scene occupies a distinct rectangle of space. Underneath each frame is a blank bottom segment painted

a basic cream. Simple titles are placed here, further amplifying the picture-frame layout of the project. The straightforward titles range from broad topics such as "Japanese Internment" to "Development of Suburbia," to individual names such as "David Gonzales," a son of Mexican immigrants awarded a Medal of Honor posthumously after serving in WWII and the first resident of L.A. county to sacrifice his life in the war. While Baca set the tone for the topics she wanted represented, it was students who played a large role in the selection of subjects.

There are two related genres contributing to the category of mural scenes. The first illustrates modes of oppression. The repetition of this theme in several frames of the mural wall demonstrates how bias repeatedly informs historical events. The duplication also encourages viewers to discover similarities between forms of oppression, such as the fear-fueled racism in Japanese internment and the segregation of people of color in the development of suburbia. The second genre deliberately displays people of color in positions of power in order to ensure that instances of oppression are responded to through empowerment instead of dismay. From strong Olympian athletes to decorated soldiers of WWII, proud figures of color are celebrated in the paintings. For the first time community onlookers are able to see themselves reflected in a positive rendition of national development. In essence, inclusion of persons of color, acting in images previously inhabited by whites only, such as a WWII solider, creates an entirely new illustration of history through the *Great Wall*. The event is the same in facts and figures, but instead new heroes are called upon to fit the vision of our American past.

Baca infuses a minority perspective into popularized historical events such as WWII and the birth of Rock and Roll music. This addition of minority perspective is poignantly coupled with the action of highlighting lesser-told stories that represent the plight of a marginalized community. An example in the *Great Wall* is a panel depiction of the Los Angeles locale of

Chavez Ravine. A largely Mexican American community in the early twentieth century, Chavez Ravine would later be reclaimed by the government for re-development, on the grounds of eminent domain. Thousands were displaced to make room for “Elysian Park Heights.” The project never materialized due to accusations of being a socialist plot during the height of the Red Scare. Dodger’s stadium would eventually occupy the space. In this example, the mural’s imagery detailing the plight of Chavez Ravine’s populace reverberates on the Tujunga Channel, whose government-sponsored construction also had significant urban impact. The “Development of Suburbia” panel further explicates a lesser-recognized narrative as well, though part of a familiar tale. The cookie-cutter white suburbs are depicted in juxtaposition to the desolate farmland and its minority workers in this particular frame, the former headed joyfully towards the viewers perspective while the latter is turned away, walking, as if banished from the primary landscape. Taking the Channel’s history into consideration, the repeated theme of housing developments and their subsequent socioeconomic divisions seem all the more pertinent.

Entering the mural project, Baca wanted to give volume to a voice often silenced in a way that also empowered the community and bridged gaps in social networks. Taking on a project of such a large scale, Baca carefully designed a working structure to organize volunteers to further her original goals of community engagement. Self-titled Mural Makers, volunteers ranged in age from 14 to 21, cycled through working during the summers of 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1983 to complete the mural in its entirety (Doss, 1995, 178). They not only received artistic training, but also held discussions on Fridays with university professors and community members to research the themes and content of the mural. Through talking about ethnic histories and political dynamics, Baca wanted volunteers to clarify and empower their position in Los Angeles and in greater society (Doss, 1995, 179). The volunteers were all Los Angeles residents

in need of this support system. Mural Maker Todd Ableser stated, "the feeling came from…seeing what I was personally capable of at a time in my life when my self-confidence had been extremely low" (Doss, 1995, 179). The Mural staff not only interacted among their own diverse crew, but they also joined forces with the broader Los Angeles community. Baca displayed the designs in public places, presented public speeches about the product, and interviewed residents about their histories (Doss, 1995, 181). Also, the community was asked to donate supplies, which for Baca, meant they would have a greater investment and sense of ownership in the *Great Wall*.

Throughout her public art career Judith Baca has practiced a community consciousness-raising model of implementing art projects. She would use the same *Great Wall* model in other projects, such as in Guadalupe, California, which Baca perceived as having a similar historical trajectory. When assigned to the small farming town of Guadalupe for a mural project shortly after working on the *Great Wall*, months went by before Baca bought the paints. She was using the time to eat in the restaurants, visit agriculture fields to take photographs and concern herself with the wants and needs of the residents. Before launching into a re-telling of the town's racial conflicts through the planned mural, Baca went to primary sources to learn about it. Panel two, "Ethnic Contributions," displays concepts of ancestry through ghostly-depicted persons. These ghosts are intermingling with their descendents who continue to work in the same farm fields, "Baca illustrated Guadalupe's racially diverse yet interlinked history, reminding viewers that yesterday's racial conflicts continue to shape attitudes and behaviors" (Doss, 1995, 166).

After the *Great Wall*'s success, social and governmental agencies wanted to know Baca's "secret," and focused in on her success at limiting graffiti through her mural projects. Baca however, had a much deeper vision than that, for "if art agencies treat her [Baca] mural projects

(and those of other artists) as social Band-Aids, she views them as instruments of social reform" (Doss, 1995, 184). One of the most successful aspects of the project from a social reform perspective is the mural's accessible meaning and readability. Baca strives to create imagery that may have hidden meaning for those with additional knowledge or impetus to research, but mainly renders the imagery self-explanatory in their historical plot. Coupled with a thoughtful structure of volunteer employment and community involvement, the imagery in the Great Wall completes Judith Baca's multidimensional vision of art intertwined with social change.

Heidi Schork, Boston Mural Crew

Currently in its nineteenth year, the Mural Crew blossomed in 1991 as a segment of the city's summer work programming for local teenagers, the Boston Youth Clean-Up Corps (BYCC). A flood of federal funding in the early 1990's had facilitated experimentation and expansion of such work programs, and the Mural Crew was seen as a politician's answer to urban graffiti. The first assignment was to create public art that would prevail over the graffiti in Codman Square, Dorchester. It was a unique option among the other BYCC initiatives, which included a large amount of weed-whacking and gardening empty parking lots.

Artist Heidi Schork was appointed director of the Crew in 1991 and led a team of eight females that same summer. Not long after selecting their first space for a project, they learned that the wall they had chosen was already inscribed—with the names of fifteen community members killed on that particular street from gang violence. The Crew decided to incorporate the names into the mural, utilizing South African patterning for the design. The Boston Globe gave a glowing report of their project, praising their positive portrayal of otherwise negative emotions. The next summer, Schork returned to the Crew and began to experiment with political content in her murals, including the story of Rodney King. The Mural Crew memorialized King,

a controversial victim of police brutality in Los Angeles, in an Egyptian formatted work. Police officers voiced their concern over a large-scale public depiction of a police beating. The same media that had congratulated the Crew one year earlier now hesitated to demonstrate support as negative commentary accumulated. In response, Schork agreed to a second mural where amicable relations between police and citizens would be illustrated. It was an early signal that the Crew's relationship with the Mayor's office had a censoring edge.

The Crew's murals all have a story-telling quality, and many of the narratives are directly inspired by the history of the site. An example is the *Faces of Dudley* mural in Dudley Square attached to the T-station. As its name suggests, numerous faces appear in this detailed depiction of life at Dudley Square. Overlapping portraits – a man gets his haircut as a child lands a lay-up on the basketball court -- are peppered with emblematic symbols of the neighborhood, such as a Silver Slipper Restaurant sign. Malcolm X was a former resident of the area and would have walked by the station many times. He is portrayed proudly in the mural, placed side-by-side with community residents. The mural has the propensity to become a teaching point about that location's history and presents an opportunity for a display of pride. Malcolm X becomes a neighbor that communicates to pedestrians their own capacity for stirring social change. His actions are made relevant and personally achievable as he stands poised next to the barber and checker-players, just one of the Dudley crowd.

It is difficult to determine if the Crew has overcome their initial goal set by politicians to derail urban graffiti. Being regarded by the public as a grounds crew versus an artistic group with a message of achieving change has been frustrating. Taking into consideration the quantity of murals the Crew has produced, it almost seems that the Crew arrived at the same goal of urban beautification that politicians desired anyway. With regard to selecting a site for a project,

Schork explains her rationale, "The huge eyesore, the boarded-up, decaying building that no one cares about anymore. That's what I'm looking for" (McCormack, 2002). Nonetheless, the Crew does not consider aesthetic urban development to take precedence in their efforts. The content of the mural's narratives and the sentiment of the teamwork are paramount to concerns about graffiti. The murals become a way of illuminating a neglected corner and transforming it into a meaningful community landmark.

It is clear from Schork's directorship that the immediate care and development of the Crew members remains the primary goal of the program. Referring to the Rodney King mural, Heidi has stated, "I wasn't out there to make art for the ages. This really has nothing to do with creating great art. It's really all about process with the kids. And if they want to sit on the curb for hours looking at books of Egyptian art, hey, that's cool with me" (McCormack, 2002). For teens participating in the BYCC program, the process is about the teamwork, the paycheck, the mental diversion, the work experience and the mentoring. Schork has to step into the shoes of a counselor and coach more than she does that of an artist.

The emphasis on the process and education of making the art may come at the expense of the ultimate art product, but that is not a secret within the program. There is a range of artistic ability among participants: "Some come in with beautiful black portfolios full of paintings. Some bring notebooks filled with doodles. And then there are the kids with a folded up 8" by 11" paper with something that looks like they drew it in the subway on the way here. We accept all of them. Anyone who has the guts to come over here deserves an opportunity. For many of these kids it's their first paid job and none of them have ever painted on a wall before. They come in quaking!" (McCormack, 2002).

Certainly some Crew Muralists have been skilled artists and some former members have gone on to achieve art scholarships. The Mural Crew's role in cultivating a deeper appreciation for art, in addition to a possible artistic skill set, is one of the most valuable sentiments imparted during the short summer months. Schork keys into this importance when she retorts, "After all, the museums can't just depend on a homogeneous population of guys in bow ties" (McCormack, 2002). Schork's method of participation follows her valuing the success of the process over the final product. As an example, the task of finishing the mural becomes the focus with some crews. Schork recognizes that her team members need to be part of something successful and to see a project through to completion. Their lives are stories of struggle and incomplete promises, so they need to be able to point to the mural later and take ownership of their role. Facilitating youths to achieve that perspective in Schork's art.

Despite some losses due to construction or weather, the Crew's work has a substantial presence in Boston's urban landscape. This in turn reflects the Crew participants' steady presence outdoors. As much as the murals are a statement of public art, the Crew is also a consistent visual model of youth teamwork and cooperation. There is a limit to how much a mural can teach and in effect, it appears that the most learning occurs when the team is outside during the summer months, conversing with pedestrians and learning to work as a unit. Residents receive a glimpse into a dynamic, didactic model of progress, and the participants reap the benefit of being seen as part of that model and responsible for its workings. The mural creation becomes therapeutic, reverberating to first impact the crew members, then the residents who see themselves reflected and celebrated in the murals, and finally in the governmental officials who are forced to listen to the historically silenced stories through a series of inescapable visual narratives.

Schork maintains a separation between her own work as an artist and her community work, which in turn is her main employment and source of health insurance. The element of an institutional connection and its ties to a paycheck reminds Schork to tread lightly on controversial subjects. In spite of this limiting factor, Schork does not shy away from praising the governmental connection. The city has always kept the program well supported and Schork is unabashed in claiming, "I attribute the entire success of the program to the mayor" (Schork 2009). Schork maintains a close personal relationship with Mayor Thomas M. Menino and has painted both him and his wife into mural scenes. Schork has an obligation to convince the Mayor of their shared goals so that he can recognize the Mural Crew as achieving them, even if it he is unfamiliar with methods of social art activism.

Long before the paint dries, or the mural narrative is even selected, Heidi Schork has begun her artistic process. For the Mural Crew, it is the conversations and actions that accompany the birth of the mural that testify to the Crew's pedagogical quality. Schork plays by her own rules, from the technical standards of the illustration to her intimate connection to governmental systems.

John Ahearn, Various works produced 1970's-1990's with focus on Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha (1996)

Before John Ahearn became the critics' darling in a burgeoning alternative art scene during the 1980s, and even before he took up residence on the sixth floor of a run-down apartment building in the South Bronx, he was a doctor's son residing in upstate New York (Fairbrother & Potts, 1993). From a private boarding high school to Cornell University, Ahearn had enjoyed the fruits of a privileged economic background. He would graduate from the collegiate Ivy League institution in 1973 and relocate to the SoHo neighborhood of New York

City that same year. A painter in college, Ahearn was enthralled by the notion of sacrifice and suffering in the name of art (Kramer, 1994). He would often paint outside in the debilitating cold of January in order to evoke Van Gogh's anguish. Arriving in New York City, Ahearn abandoned painting when he got involved with a radical art group. His primary years downtown would be spent in a series of experimentations as he immersed himself in the art scene, working primarily with film but also fluttering to and from various projects as he searched for a medium.

In 1979, while experimenting with costumes for a movie production he was involved with, Ahearn discovered life-casting. He was immediately taken with the practice, and would contribute a large portion of his creative energy to refining and personalizing it over the course of his career. An intimate art process, life-casting starts with the application of a gel directly onto the body of participant, who then must stay still for twenty minutes while the material sets (Fairbrother & Potts, 1993). The artist works with the subject on a close physical level, and since the pose has to be decided prior to the gel application, the artist develops a rapport with the subject leading up to the initial cast. Ahearn adds details to the cast after it is in plaster form, partly through his paint application of mainly bright, primary colors.

Ahearn's development as an artist was occurring at the same time there was a shift in the thinking about art within the New York network of artists (Kwon, 2002). Following the 1960's, artists had become progressively more interested in escaping the traditional art institution, and that interest manifested itself in their artwork. This led to a focus by artists on dematerialization, as well as seeking out new venues for art exhibition and commissions. Ahearn related to these sentiments in that he wanted little to do with the elitism he perceived within both the museum institutions and the accompanying art market. Ahearn's twin brother Charles, a filmmaker in Tribeca, would aid in his removal from such establishments by convincing his brother early on to

include his art in an “alternative” space (Fairbrother & Potts, 1993). Specifically, Charles recommended Fashion Moda in the South Bronx. The inspiration for Fashion Moda’s founding was directly aligned with Ahearn’s concerns about incorporation into the official art sphere. Fashion Moda defined itself as a concept rather than a place, and described its content as “a collection of science, invention, technology, art and fantasy.” It defended the ground outside of technical art education and the rules of art criticism and economy through its support of adventurous artists. The unique space would become the site of Ahearn’s first exhibition, “The South Bronx Hall of Fame,” which consisted of numerous life-casting portraits. Like many castings to follow, participation was open to any volunteers in the South Bronx population, and a majority of the casting took place in the street rather than an indoor studio. Ahearn eventually moved to the South Bronx in 1980 in an effort to further assimilate into the community base, whose empowerment he had incorporated as a goal of his artwork.

Willing cast participants worked with Ahearn to develop a pose, and then Ahearn would produce two versions of the cast. One was often given to the participant to display in their home, and a gallery in uptown Manhattan sold the other copy. This practice was at times interrupted by Ahearn’s desire to share the cast with the “right” person and “right” home, as well as his hoarding habits, which forced him to keep many casts in a Bronx warehouse (Kramer, 1994). Ahearn stumbled upon a loyal collaborator and artistic partnership, Rigoberto Torres, known as Robert, through this model of open casting calls (Fairbrother & Potts, 1993). Torres was a Puerto Rican high school student when Ahearn first cast him. He had familiarized himself with casting from his work in a factory owned by his uncle producing religious figurines. Ahearn, a Catholic, identified with the form of religious figurines and collectively their products took on some of these statuette aspects. Together with Torres, Ahearn extended his project beyond

individual portraiture to larger scale installations on the side of buildings. Ahearn would produce four installations in half a decade's time, and each had a similar joyous, if not idealistic, life scene. The sugary sweet vignettes, such as a child's yellow school bus journey to school, did strike Ahearn as possibly being too idealized. His hesitations were negated when he recognized the residents' feedback,

> Even though the artist himself worried at times that they were too much like folk art, as long as the work made his neighbors "happy," Ahearn thought of them as achieving more meaningful and difficult goals than what is usually expected of an artwork….the cast sculptures made to please a neighbor are "purer than something with too much of myself in it, something individual (Kwon, 2002, 89).

Ahearn's life-casting portrait process lent itself to a lively, idealized vision. Yet in reality, the South Bronx region where he had taken an address was one of the poorest and most violent in New York, with a high AIDS rate and drug abuse. The portraits Ahearn produced during his time on Walton Avenue rarely provided the viewer with any insight into this degree of suffering. His simple vignettes were of children making their way to school, cradling pets and embracing their siblings. Was Ahearn making a mockery of the residents? Or was he imposing his own vision of the Bronx, or what he wanted it to be, onto the casting participants? A religious man from his upbringing, Ahearn was reported to have a knack for seeing the "good" in everyone (Kramer, 1994). Those close to him even claimed he could have been a priest. A likely answer is that his portraits reflected his belief in the good life present on Walton Avenue, despite the backdrop of chaos. One of the real-life figures in his rejected bronze statue campaign had robbed Ahearn on several occasions. Nonetheless, Ahearn allowed him to sleep on his sofa in the winter and continued to support him when others on the block shunned the man for drug

abuse. Ahearn's artistic style reflected his concerns with people society had rejected or ignored; Ahearn was open to the participation of those who were shunned or unwanted, eager to develop a personal relationship and insistent on portraying them in a positive light.

Ultimately, it was Ahearn's reputation as an artist-in-residence in the South Bronx which led to a commission for an art project at the 44th Precinct Police building in 1986 by New York's "Percent for Art: initiative. Director Tom Finkelpearl stated, "[Ahearn] was an obvious choice because he lived close to the station, enjoyed a good critical reputation, and had already spent many years interacting with the community…he was well acquainted with the specific nature of the community within which the commission was sited, and worked in a figurative style that is considered accessible" (Finkelpearl, 2000, 81-2). Due to the media wounds inflicted by the controversy that emerged with Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* two years prior, Ahearn's selection team included representation from the Police Department, the Department of General Services, the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Bronx Museum of Art and various other art professionals and politicians (Finkelpearl, 2000, 81). After Ahearn's selection however, his proposal was not reviewed in depth by the Community Board and Art commission. This may have been due to his popularity in the past, and a confidence in his community partnership (Finkelpearl, 2000).

Instead of the police station that was suggested as a potential site for a mural, Ahearn selected the traffic circle across the street from the 44th Precinct as a preferred site to launch his work. Ahearn was careful to distance himself from the station, stating, "works which are built within the contextual frame of governmental, corporate, educational, and religious institutions run the risk of being read as tokens of those institutions" (Kwon, 2002, 88). Most of Ahearn's projects had been self-funded up to this point, so he was especially aware of this aspect of a merger. The site of the art was also significant as the police would be a primary viewer, and

there were tensions between residents and police. Ahearn's original plan of action was to host a large-scale community casting. He wanted the traffic triangle to be filled with a crowd of concrete figures but the city denied his request, citing the vulnerability of concrete to damage. The budget could cover three to four bronze figures, and ultimately that is what Ahearn settled for.

In 1991, Ahearn presented three Bronx sculptures modeled after three of his friends and fellow community residents: Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha. Gone were his storybook vignettes, as Ahearn challenged himself to find a different route to the same effect of community empowerment. Inspiration for the figures was draw from the Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City, where national heroes are honored in statue form (Kramer, 1994). By placing Raymond on a pedestal both physically and metaphorically, Ahearn wanted to change the way in which onlookers viewed him. Instead of the hooded figure who intermittently spent time behind bars, Raymond could be seen as the sentimental man who loved his pet pit-bull like his own child—the side Ahearn knew and loved. To Ahearn, the three residents Raymond, Corey and Daleesha were "survivors of the streets" who deserved to be celebrated and thus, elevated (Kwon, 2002, 91).

Before the sculptures' unveiling, concern was expressed that the depictions carried racist undertones and communicated negative stereotypes of the neighborhood's residents. Finkelpearl later relayed the sequence of events as the protest slowly unfolded. Snapshots of the progress of the sculptures began to make the rounds of the Department of General Services a few weeks prior to installation of the statues. The DGS commissioner Kenneth Knuckles contacted the commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Charmaine Jefferson, to express concern that the sculptures were racist depictions. Both commissioners were African-American.

Jefferson stated that she did not interpret them as racist, but recognized that members of the DCA, varying in racial identity, agreed with Knuckles. Talks began between parties; the opposed explained that they still supported Ahearn's selection but maintained that the stereotypical portrayals were "not positive role models" or "appropriate as public monuments" (Finkelpearl, 2000, 84). A small contingent of community members echoed these concerns, with a main apprehension being the placement of the statues on Jerome Avenue, where traffic to Yankee Stadium was sent. Residents advocating for the sculptures to be taken down wanted positive images of their neighborhood residents to be conveyed to visitors passing through, particularly on this popular Manhattan route. Residents declared that Ahearn was not properly representing the community because he had chosen to focus on "illegitimate" members of it, only confirming outside perspective as well as the police's (Kwon, 2002, 91).

The concerns caught Ahearn by surprise. In his mind, the sculptures were not stereotypes because they were real people. One misstep was that he had defined a community according to geographical location while others chose to define the community across racial lines. In consequence, the latter were insulted that a white man felt comfortable interpreting and representing a black man. Unlike his previous casts that were intimate collaborations with those being represented, the Police Plaza project was developed in an isolated studio without any residents' input. He lamented, "It never occurred to me that this [Raymond] would be a negative image. It was so popular in the art world. I figured that the community deserved to have this image" (Finkelpearl, 2000, 91). He regretted his decision "to make art, make a statement" with "complications" instead of being concerned with what would make people happy (Kramer, 1994).

Ahearn had invested so much time establishing emotional ties to the neighborhood he could not bear the thought of upsetting its members. The influx of negative phone calls after the installation reflected the discontent of the community. The three bronze sculptures were installed on September 26th and removed on October 1st, in large part to Ahearn's decision. In retrospect, it seems Ahearn struggled to separate himself and the art piece from the institutions that funded the project (Finkelpearl, 2000, 86). He chose not to accommodate community opinion during the creative process, presupposing his understanding of what the South Bronx wanted or needed. The statues were relocated to a Long Island City museum where, "white people from Manhattan often go to look at "statements"" (Kramer, 1994). Consideration of Ahearn in discussion of an outsider perspective contributing to artwork almost complicates the debate more than it solves it. He challenges the requirements of what it means to belong to a community, and if that membership is really necessary in order to include its portrayal in personal art expression.

Charles Simonds, Dwellings

What is made of sticks and stones has no permanent home, and is valued at thirty thousand dollars? Simonds' *Dwellings* were designed to escape marketability, supporting his supposition that contemporary society share ownership of his artwork. In developing a way to make his art inaccessible to the established economic structure of the art world, Simonds took a two-pronged approach to his artistic espionage. The first way in which Simonds achieved the separation was by making his art temporary. Its vulnerability to urban elements mandated that it could not be adopted as a material possession. His secondary strategy was placement outdoors, in hidden corners of the urban universe of New York City. These mechanisms were as effective in his outward rejection of the contemporary art institution as they were a perfect complement to

his metaphorical rendition of the *Dwellings'* meaning, specifically their imaginary inhabitants, Little People. While the series undoubtedly received support, external and internal changes in Simonds' approach during the project's development would also alter its message and rescind some of that common ground.

Charles Simonds was born and raised in New York City by parents who were psychoanalysts. He pursued an undergraduate degree in art at the University of California at Berkeley in 1967, and then returned to the east coast for a Master's in Fine Art from Rutgers' University in New Jersey. Simonds was quickly absorbed into the downtown New York art scene after his tour of Rutgers, and he routinely shared buildings, studios and loft spaces with artists and art critics during the 1970s and 1980s. Although a member of the urban artistic community, Simonds worked diligently to have his artwork remain untouched by its biases. Museums still desired his *Dwellings* and recognized them as a high art form, while Simonds continued to participate in professional artists' social circles.

Simonds is perhaps best known for his *Dwellings*, miniature clay models of housing complexes that he installed on the streets of New York from 1971-1982. He created over three hundred of these sculptures in the course of his decade-long experimentation with the concept. Constructed with clay and other organic materials, and installed in unexpected crevices, gutters and ledges, the pieces were temporary and subject to destruction by natural elements. Native American pueblos partially inspired the choice of clay as material, as well as the style of the dwellings' architecture. The building structures, in form and substance, recall American Indians relationship to nature and the earth and stand in stark contrast to the New York City setting where they are implanted. In effect, Simonds works to expose the negative impact of mega-capitalism on marginalized populations such as Native Americans. This is achieved through the

dwellings' vulnerability to outdoor exposure and is exemplified by the Manhattan location (Stiles, 1996, 562). He called upon aspects of native culture to underscore goals thematic in the work. For Simonds, the Native American population endured a similar tragedy to his own conception of the *Dwellings* former residents, with the parallel providing an opportunity to talk about the oppression.

In addition to the creation of the tiny homes, Simonds also created an accompanying story of their former inhabitants. The artist deemed the vanished population "Little People" and proposed that their extinction was a byproduct of urbanization. Simonds states,

> I think of the dwellings in a very narrative way. It's the story of a group of people moving through life and the possibility of their survival as a fantasy in the city. The meaning comes only through seeing more than one in relation to another. There is also a sequence of events within each dwelling, each scene; the pathos of something from the past, remnants of another people's existence frozen out of some memory or internal image and then laid out in real time…the dwellings have a past as ruins and they are the past of the human race, a migration (Stiles, 1996, 562).

He desired pedestrians to stumble upon the creations, internalizing the surprise as well as reflecting on the possibilities of the Little People population – a metaphor for society's marginalized, invisible caste. Of course there is no guarantee that a pedestrian would be able to identify the history conceived in Simonds' imagination. His artwork may have fit requirements of accessibility in terms of their location outdoors, yet the metaphorical design required extra knowledge and research to comprehend. It is possible that translation to the general public was

not Simonds' primary goal. By placing his abstracted theory in a high traffic urban environment, he was well aware that not all viewers would be able to interpret the piece in all its complexity.

The initial stage of Simonds' *Dwellings* project was in film format. His first two films, *Birth* (1970) and *Landscape/Body/Dwelling* (1970) narrated Simonds' metaphorical birth as related to the natural earth and his invented population of Little People. The viewer watches as a naked Simonds rises from a clay mound where he has buried himself. This connection of his own physical body to earthly materials was thematic in his works on *Dwellings*, which would immediately follow the film series. Simonds referred to these films as his "Mythologies." While a pedestrian might not have viewed the films prior to or after finding an outdoor *Dwelling*, they still maintain a significant place in the artwork's development process. This is where the museum connection that Simonds so desperately tried to avoid actually became a dynamic contributor. Museums supported the additional dialogue about the work, such as the video and anthropological writing, and enabled him to connect them to the *Dwellings*. Much to Simonds' dismay, the art world was a perpetuator of information, sometimes even a translator, between the broader population and the art pieces.

While collaborative mural projects are conceptualized and carried out with a portion of the community participating in its creation, Simonds' work was primarily a one-man show. The same concepts of social inequity informed his work as they did the work of muralist and organizer Judith Baca but Simonds was more detached in other respects. He did not employ teenagers to assemble his *Dwellings* nor did he collaborate with interest groups to fundraise or commission his structures. He did not communicate with community members to receive their input, and one could argue, as a result, he was unexpectedly redirected to a new them of social change—creating safe urban neighborhoods for children. While assembling his small scale

"Dwelling" outdoors, Simonds discovered that he captured the attention of children, who were intrigued with the little structures. The relationships he developed with child observers led the artist to realize that the Lower East Side, where a majority of his pieces were concentrated, did not have adequate play space for its younger inhabitants. In 1974, Simonds successfully advocated for a playground in the urban neighborhood. He describes the experience, "The most exciting thing over the last year has been to watch the reactions to the fantasy world of the Little People develop into the idea, or fantasy, of the park, which in turn has developed into a reality through the use of exactly those politicized energies. The reality of the park is the result of two fantasies—mine and theirs, which met through the Little People" (Stiles, 1996, 563).

Simonds began to show his *Dwellings* in museums in the later 1970s, and his reasoning is not entirely transparent. His intimate connections to the art world may have motivated this venue choice. It is also possible that Simonds did not perceive a problematic difference between the museumgoer population and a general audience because he was so familiar with, and belonged within, the former. The *Dwellings* appeared the same as his outdoor work, made from the same materials, in the same pueblo style and on the same small scale, yet their significance shifted entirely. The *Dwellings* lost their temporariness as well as physical accessibility. No longer would a pedestrian delight in the discovery of a small village model tucked into a corner gutter. The *Dwellings* were a commodity in the museum space, and as such were quickly integrated into the art arena. Changing the location of the pieces removed their community ownership capacity. This was solidified by the fact that Simonds was always a sole creator. The community never had creative control of the product, so when it was also physically removed from their space, any chance of ownership was extinguished.

Each of the *Dwellings* structures took exactly one day to complete, methodically constructed in tiny brick pieces. Simonds could often be seen bicycling around the Lower East Side with pounds of New Jersey clay balanced in a front wheel basket. A former art student reminisced about spotting Simonds, and bursting into tears at the thought that her former art teacher was now delivering pizza after, presumably, failing in the art world. As a personality, little is known about Simonds, though his actions suggest a solitary tendency. Both his art and actions seem to have been trying to teach the world a lesson. If true, it would only make his foray into museum exhibition more puzzling. There was an undoubted loss of effectiveness when the *Dwellings* moved inside museum walls, primarily because the foundation of the work had been relying on this independence. Simonds' relationship to the museum institution, teetering between rejection and reconciliation, could possibly be explained as having taken the place of a social organization that other new genre public artists have found in non-profits or social work.

Simonds' *Dwellings* operated chiefly as art, with an application and connection to areas of social change throughout. This is a slightly different blend than prioritizing community participation in the art creation, as Judith Baca and Heidi Schork actively did in their mural projects. The different emphasis is made most clear when recognizing that Simonds' main social change product, the children's park, was not the original intention of his work. Instead, Simonds stumbled upon the opportunity much in the same way pedestrians discovered his *Dwellings*. This accidental activism should not undermine Simonds' social justice focus in his artwork however, as his detailed concept of Little People carried important metaphors for marginalization in contemporary urban settings. What distinguishes Simonds' work is that the accessibility of his work paled in comparison to Baca's straightforward large outdoor murals, for instance. Thus modern museums' context could effectively translate Simonds' message to the wider public.

Mary Jane Jacob, "Culture in Action: New Public Art in Chicago"

"Culture in Action: New Public Art in Chicago" was the ultimate product of a two-year period of community partnerships and artist research, culminating in a five-month exhibition shown in the summer of 1993 in Chicago, Illinois. The title "exhibit" is applied loosely in this instance, as the exhibition did not occur within a conventional museum setting. It consisted of eight collaborative projects set in different parts of the city and including a chocolate bar, a hydroponic garden, and a community parade. Curator Mary Jane Jacob facilitated the program with the support of a nonprofit arts organization titled Sculpture Chicago. Jacobs aimed to challenge the established norm of art exhibition, including limits on dematerialization, the definition of an art piece and the exhibition's separation from a museum institution.

Although partnered for a 1993 show, Jacob was not an avid supporter of Sculpture Chicago's earlier work (Kwon, 2002). As a result, the prelude to her summer exhibit revolved around Jacob's attempt to strengthen what she viewed as unsuccessful attempts by Sculpture Chicago toward fostering public engagement. In 1989, Sculpture Chicago had put on a program that placed ten sculptures throughout Chicago's plazas. Jacob disliked the traditional art pieces, as well as their conventional placement. Sculpture Chicago had attempted to design the 1989 program to expose the art process to the general public, doing so mainly by setting up the artists' studios in tents outdoors where the public could view pieces being constructed. She looked to "Culture in Action" to bridge the divide between "artist and audience, between producer and spectator" (Kwon, 2002, 102). Overcoming the passivity of the art spectator in conventional art exhibits was a primary element woven into the design of "Culture in Action."

The first stage of Jacob's transformation of activity would be direct collaboration with the community. Discussion around the project started as early as 1990 with an assortment of

community members including artists, Sculpture Chicago staff, community organizers and residents (Jacob, 1995, 59). Invited artists visited Sculpture Chicago offices in 1992, continuing to solidify the focus and implementation of their work. Their plans were presented to professionals in December of 1992 in the manner of an open forum and round table dialogues. The final tally of artists included Suzanne Lacy, Simon Grennan, Christopher Sperandio, Mark Dion, David J. Martinez, Wendy Jacobs, John Ploof, Laurie Palmer, Richard House, Inigo Manglano-Ovalle, Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler.

Suzanne Lacy contributed two related projects to "Culture in Action." Her *Full Circle* piece placed one hundred half-ton boulders onto Chicago's streets. The boulders were installed late in the evening on the loop of downtown Chicago, their secretive placement subscribing to guerilla art tactics. Each boulder contains a commemorative plaque to honor the service and contribution of a local Chicago female resident. The rocks were from a female-owned quarry in Oklahoma. Lacy envisioned the project as filling a gap in Chicago monuments oriented toward women. Several committees were established to oversee the selection process of the names of the women commemorated on the plaques. Lacy would later be criticized for a half-hearted democratic process, as the selection committee did not engage in the creative process concerning the initial idea. Moreover, though the women selected represented a spectrum of ages, religions, careers and ethnicities, many wondered if Lacy had been guilty of oversimplifying their unity as women (Kwon, 2002, 119). For the artist, she did not see gender as an inappropriate categorization, but rather as a, "tranhistorical, transcultural, and gender-specific sensibility" (Kwon, 2002, 118). In Lacy's eyes, every woman was represented by her own boulder and thus her accomplishment stood singularly.

Lacy's second project was titled *Dinner at Jane's*. She invited fourteen influential women to a dinner at Hull House, a community center for women that advocated political activism, art, education and social justice. The idea was conceived after a realization that discussions about the theory of women's role in these professional spheres most likely occurred at the Hull House on a regular basis. Lacy captured this particular meal in a documentary format. Similar to her boulder installation, the basis of gender for a shared identity characteristic proved unsettling for the art's observers. This sentiment was aggravated by the premise of the event being a dinner, stereotypically conceived as only within a woman's domain.

Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio's contribution to Culture in Action tackled both a different social system of concern and a divergent medium to express that concern. The pair collaborated with the Bakery, Confectionary and Tobacco Workers' International Union of America Local No. 552 to produce a candy bar with a wrapper advocating workers' rights. Grennan and Sperandio initially proposed six different project plans, each with a different social issue of concern. Jacob chose among them, and chose the narrative of workers' rights. This was done before the Union was selected as a collaborator, and both Jacob and Sculpture Chicago assisted in facilitating the partnership with the Union (Kwon, 2002, 123). The fact that artists were paired with the Union and that the specific union chosen was never paramount to the project's structure, somewhat undermines the believability of the project as accurately representing the demands of the union.

Daniel J. Martinez's "West Side Three-Point Marchers" called on the support of several established community groups to organize a parade in the West-side neighborhoods of Chicago. The carnival-inspired theme of the parade was centered on immigration history, as well as issues of identity politics. His right hand women in the planning stages were Angela Coleman and

Elvia Rodriguez, who were community insiders and thus facilitated between the artist and the community needs. Martinez was not from Chicago, let alone a resident of the community, so this contact support was necessary for an appropriate, valuable parade to take place.

Mark Dion's Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group was a high school level after-school program. The group met weekly over the course of a year to study environmental phenomena. Twelve students participated in the group, and their activities included a field trip to Belize (Kwon, 2002, 126).

An art collaborative titled "Haha," consisting of Wendy Jacobs, John Ploof, Laurie Palmer and Richard House, was responsible for the project Flood. It was a hydroponic garden that grew and distributed fresh food to Chicago AIDS patients. Flood also included a networking hub for advocates of AIDS education and health care workers to plan and host events and educational programming (Kwon, 2002, 130). When the lease for the garden space expired in late 1993, Flood was forced to relocate due to financial needs. The move had a profound negative effect on the organization's workings that ultimately proved irreversible, so that it is no longer in existence.

Street Level Video by Inigo Manglano-Ovalle reached out to fifteen teenagers from the artist's predominantly Latino neighborhood. Manglano-Ovalle encouraged the teens to convey their neighborhood stories and youthful, yet seasoned perspectives, through a video medium. The artist navigated existing after-school programs as well as local public access television for structural support in his visionary endeavor. Manglano-Ovalle assisted with the development of the teenagers' technical video skills and analytical development, asking them to analyze the role of the media in portraying youth, particularly ethnic youths, from urban communities. The

artists had the foresight to request the donation of video equipment, rather then lending it, so that the program could enjoy longevity. It is still in existence today as an incorporated nonprofit titled *Street Level Youth Video*, with some of its original 1993 members joined as part of the directing administration.

Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, white artists from the east coast of the United States, collaborated on a unique paint chart for the final project of “Culture in Action.” The pair worked in tandem with the Ogden Courts Residents Group of the Ogden Courts housing development to develop a personalized paint chart. Paint colors were named after historical events in the public housing and its residents, resulting in colors such as “Arrie’s Dazzle Blue,” named after Arrie Martin, a community leader in Ogden Courts (Jacob, 1995, 22). Ericson and Ziegler were both former house painters. Prior to their involvement in “Culture in Action,” their previous projects had focused on the structure and meaning of the American home (Jacob, 1995). Michael Benson believes residents cooperated because they framed it as an opportunity to project a different image than the stereotypes society had of them, “the chart helped residents of Ogden courts contribute to a public image of themselves that can begin to counter the negative image of housing projects that is now part of the national consciousness” (Jacob, 1995, 41). Employing a paint chart as an instrument to achieve this shift of consciousness was a novel approach but whose effectiveness once it is placed in hardware stores is not easily measured.

Jacob’s design of the selection and implementation of the eight exhibit projects walked a controversial line between art and social work (Heartney, 1997, 208). Distinguishable differences included the timeline of the production and implementation. From the artists’ perspective, the short-term installation was valuable, preventing stagnancy of idea innovation in the public art field. From a citizen perspective, the successful hydroponic garden and health

information center could have provided a service for the rest of their life. If AIDS does not follow the 5-month window of the exhibit, does the exhibit have a right to explore space for art in health services? How can community members be expected to participate fully in health discussion groups at Flood for example, already privy to the knowledge that the organization did not have a long-term plan?

Returning to the context of public art as sharing a history in and outside of governmental funding, Jacob was on the side of artists' autonomy and control in public projects. Backlash for this sidestepping of design team involvement emerged and there were some who accused Jacob of fulfilling the autonomous role of the artist, just under the different title of curator. She was able to decide the subject of several of the projects as well as choose and participate in their community partnerships. It was Sculpture Chicago who paired Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio with the Bakery, Confectionary and Tobacco Workers' International Union. Furthermore, that connection happened at a much later stage in the artwork's development, "the conceptual framework of the projects was fully articulated prior to any conversations with potential collaborators; the community partners instead came to fill predelineated blank spots within the framework" (Kwon, 2002, 123). Ironically, this complaint echoes a very similar sentiment to those that public artists had felt sitting in on a design team, after being called in at the last second and forced to make choices out of a limited subset.

Jacob has proudly heralded the project for its site locations outside of museums and, "the freedom they allow for innovation, the potential they offer for public accessibility, and the psychic space the afford artists and audience" (Jacob, 1995, 50). Yet similar to Simonds' predicament in some ways, the very institutional partnership Jacob is attempting to eliminate in her exhibit structure is necessary for the projects to exist in historical memory as art. This

dependency is intimately intertwined with the experimental nature of the projects in relation to the definition of art. Without the art world to substantiate and record conversation around "Culture in Action" as an art exhibit, then society would be free to categorize it singularly as social work. The other challenge to independence for Jacob was the financial support needed for the undertaking. Economics can keep even the most nonconformist artists attached to the institution, even if their creations are in effect a reaction against the institution. While "Culture in Action" may have been able to shirk the shadow of the museum, there is still a curator affiliation navigating logistics and budget, as demonstrated in Jacob's hands-on intermediary role. There is a need for artists and curators to admit this bias, especially because they should be understood by the art world and expected by the general public. In regard to her role and that of "Culture in Action," Jacob had stated, "it must be clear that for the duration of the project, no one owns the project more than they do," despite the extent of her involvement suggesting differently (Jacob, 1995, 41).

Not only was the subject matter of the eight projects dissimilar, but their location was as well. In fact, only Lacy's boulder initiative happened in downtown Chicago, "All of the [other] projects unfolded in working-class or poor areas that hardly anyone outside Chicago would think of when picturing the greatness of this city" (Jacob, 1995, 19). Moreover, each was designed in a way that requires visiting the site in order to understand the context and the sites were places where museum-goers and the elite class were not likely to frequent (Jacob, 1995, 25). The striking differences between neighborhoods separated by no more than ten miles, or the extent to which residents explore their surroundings, is a phenomenon not exclusive to Chicago. Often these division lines cross socioeconomic and racial differences. The initial allure for peripheral locations could be as Jacob narrated, "the freedom they allow for innovation, the potential they

offer for public accessibility, and the psychic space they afford artists and audience" (Jacob, 1995, 50). However the truest ramifications were that, "'Culture in Action' had a grittiness that made it extremely difficult for visitors to encounter its projects without experiencing the social and economic realities and the humanity of the communities with whom the artists worked" (Jacob, 1995, 19). This certainly worked in the favor of artists who anticipated or welcomed the additional exposure of the audience to their unwanted reality. The art museums are part of the uptown scene, and for those participants to travel outside their comfort zone adds another layer of experience to the artwork.

Jacob stated that, "'Culture in Action' began by questioning assumptions: Who is the audience for public art? How can public art represent the public when there are many publics?" (Jacob, 1995, 57). Her curatorial leadership style bravely explored the ways in which the public could be constructed through art process. Heartney has since challenged this approach, "Inviting artists into a community to perform a short-term collaboration smacks of another kind of paternalism that assumes that artists with a superficial understanding of a community's needs and history can supply the conceptual tools to solve its problems" (Heartney, 1997, 217). In Heartney's comments, disjuncture is made relevant between the art world already substantiating Jacob's exhibit as art and society's hesitancy to internalize it as such.

V. Conclusion

What began as an exploration into the components of a successful art campaign, ignited by clear shifts in the realm of public art and fueled by a curiosity towards their cause, ultimately transformed into a multi-step mapping of the public artist's creative process. I had first examined the historical flight of new genre, dialogue-based public art from a landscape formerly speckled with stone sculptures and Roman emperors. I then ventured into the creative progression of each of the selected case studies, proposing that their impact was measurable by community response, reconciliatory function and precedent for change. I asked critical questions that implored the root of the projects' success or failure, noticing that project participants and observers allocated value according to their differing perspectives. From my research and case study analysis, I determined that the impact varied extensively for each public work, which in turn varied in their location, intent and format. I was left with, not a formulaic singular "best art campaign" as I had set out to discern, but instead, a formulaic set of questions designed to aid the artist in identifying their goals prior to their art campaign and thus to encourage the best results from it. The questions aid the artist in filtering community conditions and available resources in order to fuse their artistic motivation with effective social change.

Why have you decided to work in the public arena? This question will guide the relationship building between place and artist, as well as art project and institutional involvement. Some public artists actively selected an outdoor location for their work as a statement of rebellion against society's ruling powers. Conceptualized as government factions, economic privilege and social elitism, these pillars of influence were important issues for social activist artists to address. They argued that in order to tackle inequality through their artwork, an escape from institutions that perpetuated this inequality was required. Resources of time and

money need to be invested in a museum visit, as well as the background knowledge to contextualize the variance of artwork. These requirements for access are innately limited and portion out a large population percentage. Artists such as John Ahearn worked diligently to eliminate this exclusion, including hosting open castings in public. When Ahearn gifted each casting model with a copy of the final art product for their living room, he was bringing the museum experience to those formerly debarred from it. The immediate act of existing outside of museums' physical space, particularly for early activist artists of the 1970s and 1980s, aided in the jump from aesthetic standards to community integration.

While rejection of existing social powers may serve to strengthen the artworks' advocacy message, to be considered is the loss of valuable services that institutions can provide. Primary is the need for financial support, eliminating the need for an artist to be a fundraiser or grant writer. John Ahearn supported his profession by connecting with galleries to sell his portrait casts, while Charles Simonds earned a living as a professor with some foray into museum exhibition. Judith Baca and Mary Jane Jacob both relied on arts organizations for financial support, which in turn were sustained by grants and private donations. Schork's work exemplifies the profitability of connecting long-term projects to institutional systems. She has openly credited the support of Boston's mayor as the main reason for the Crew's nineteen-year legacy. This relationship does not eliminate extra responsibilities aside from Schork's artistry and she has previously worked on the mayor's political re-election campaign. Ultimately the circumstances are more secure than operating independently.

Another resource provided by museums is relevant to the dematerialization of public artwork, as in the case of Simonds' *Dwellings* or Grennan and Sperandio's candy bar campaign in Chicago. Effectively, it is the interested parties of the art world who documented Simonds'

work and captured Jacob's curatorial orchestration. The detailed analysis and records provided by museum affiliates extended the degree of knowledge and exposure for the works, whether or not longevity was significant to the artists' goals. While limiting the function of institutions can aid an artist's protest of unequal power structures, there are indisputable benefits of institutional support and it should not be ruled out as an option.

What is the "problem" you are attempting to fix? This question enables artists to designate their priority between artistic aesthetics or community resolution and to determine how resources can best be used. While it is not an "either/or" circumstance by any extension, this question will aid the artist in the creation and defense of their public work. If the artist's aim is to provide niche architectural development for example, then they can move on to delegate resources to the facelift of physical spaces. The goal of urban beautification was highly motivating for the Massachusetts government at the time of the Boston Mural Crew's launch and its later legitimacy in legislation. Politicians were thrilled at the prospect of brightly painted artwork covering the city's graying streets, simultaneously refreshing Boston's image as well as City Hall's. Due to the goals of Schork's directorship, this success was achievable in tandem with working toward social change and youth development. Schork had identified the problem as the neglect and hardship inflicted on her young Crew members. As a result, if resources were tight or a choice of project site needed to be made, Schork was allocating all efforts to support of the Crew, and not of removing the graffiti.

Deviating slightly from the governmental standpoint, artist and director of the Mural Crew, Heidi Schork, had prioritized the Crew participants' personal development. Schork demonstrates that if a public artist is in pursuit of community resolution, then the weight of their task moves beyond technical blueprints and into more abstracted social networks. Artists needed

to identify their status in the target community, regarding in particular their stance in terms of insider and outsider positioning. As it follows, there are few better qualified to identify problems in need of addressing than the “insiders,” those directly impacted and engrossed in the issues. Even though an outsider’s perspective could translate to an invigorated and refocused solution, respecting the boundary of community inclusion is a foundational code of activist engagement. Community engagement artists have a responsibility to first employ the residents’ comprehension of reality in their own drafting of the locale’s state of affairs.

The handling of a site’s history and inclusion of its residents will take precedence throughout a community reconciliation-based project, a model exemplified by Ahearn’s bronze sculpture fiasco. He was an outsider based on his race, because the issues and identity in the South Bronx vicinity were defined by those categories. His live-in residency in the South Bronx did not transcend his identity as an outsider. This philosophical mismatch was revealed in the bronze sculpture project at the police plaza. While his solution, expressed in his bronze sculptures design, was informed by his participation in the unique urban subculture, he did not accurately define the problem in accord with insiders. Ahearn had defined the problem as empowerment of reality, whereby residents had defined the problem as perpetual negative stereotyping by others. Their reality was non-residents driving on Jerome Avenue and utilizing the sculptures to validate their established stereotypes of South Bronx inhabitants. Residents did not have a sense of ownership over Ahearn’s product, and it became easier for those unfamiliar with him personally to categorize him as an outsider. Ahearn was working toward reconciling his own presumption of social disjuncture in a neighborhood he deemed familiar, unknowingly constructing a public according to a foreigner’s perspective.

What is the symbiotic relationship of physical space to the artwork? This question recollects that the interaction of site space and art product occurs just as much during planning stages as after installation. That is, public artists are consciously designing a product that will have a larger and less predictable audience than an indoor museum setting. The symbiotic relationship between a variable setting and the project design is available to the artist to manipulate in favor of their art's message. Perhaps the artist chooses to work on a larger scale, such as Baca, to draw in and take advantage of the larger available viewership. Simonds established that the rapport could also have the opposite application, as he decidedly hid his pieces from common foot traffic so that the discovery process was organic. This action also meant Simonds succeeded in enhancing the thought provoking aptitude of his pieces.

Knowing the limits of public space may also interact with the artists' plans to push those social limitations beyond convention. In some respects, the legal and cultural pressure to adhere to American norms has provided a limit for public art innovation. Public art is held to more stringent classifications of what is risqué or inappropriate due to its readily available placement in a public place. The portrayal of nudity, for instance, is condoned in a museum setting on the basis of fine art and technical skill needed to relay the natural form, but is not acceptable by legal standards for say, a highway billboard on Rt. 66. Schork encountered difficulty when she chose to portray the police brutality of Rodney King in a Mural Crew wall. It was argued, mostly by the police, that the image did more harm than good. They claimed the image would incite community unrest. Schork was trying to balance truth telling and societal pressures. It is an act of courage for public artists to engage with social activist messages not widely upheld by the general public.

What is the role of the artist? Distinctive from a painter who battles between the canvas and him or herself, or at most, a patron's vision during the creative stages, public artists are just one of many consultants in the project's conception. Even if they are assigned as the directing party, artists should be honest with themselves and other participants about how they have conceived contributors' authority. The answer to this question will craft the extent of community engagement to be present in the work. The public artist must be willing to make clear compromises on his or her creative behalf, and that should occur before commitment to the project is established. To be successful in community engagement art processes, the artist has to be willing to secede individual power. The benefit of sharing power with community factions is a bridge to genuine partnerships that can reduce obstacles of insider and outsider dynamics.

The role of public artists is best described as a conductor of multiple perspectives. Public artists are more successful in harnessing mobilized energy for change by permitting others to make personal investments in the work. Key to sustaining community dialogue is the widening of the artist function to be a facilitator of these issues and an assembler of others' proposed solutions. Judith Baca granted some of her director power to participants. She did not micromanage the selection of historical events on the *Great Wall*'s panels, letting her students proceed after setting a general tone of the mural's goal. In this allotment of shared control, she answered to the role of the artist as a community organizer.

How will you measure your success? A scientific measure of public art success, admittedly flawed in its abstraction, could be gauging the impact left on the site space if or when the art piece were to be removed. This impact could be whether the piece will be remembered in its sculptural or physical memory, in addition to any less tangible changes produced in the community by the work. This variable is not precisely measurable, but one effort to trace any

effects at present is through policy changes. In the instance of Boston's Mural Crew, Schork's programming has paved the way for legislation in Massachusetts and set an example that other states have mirrored. Schork would most likely warrant this achievement a success for the Crew, pertaining especially to her goal of providing the summer opportunity to as many youth as feasible. John Ahearn may have walked away from the South Bronx Police Precinct with an unanticipated achievement of success following the bronze sculpture project: citizens were empowered through legal avenues in their organized protest of Ahearn's work. Their successful advocacy for the statues removal using institutional means was an exceptional victory for the marginalized community.

Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler's "Culture in Action" project, the Ogden Court paint chart, granted residents control over the stereotypes placed on them. The paint chart was an outlet for inhabitants to redefine unwanted representation and to challenge constraints on their identity. Participants measured success according to this direct access to power. When the paint chart was disseminated across Chicago, the sensation of altering outsiders' perception was even more substantiated. Even though the artists were concerned with metaphors of housing developments in a broader sense, it was the empowerment of the Ogden Court tenants in particular that marked the paint chart's value.

Baca organized her volunteers in a structure suggestive of her own political views and ideal of a utopian society. Baca's Mural Makers are individuals brought together by a common task, provided with tailored benefits to meet their needs and not grouped according to social constructs such as race. They learned together, worked together and accomplished a stunning artwork, which also conveys social justice sentiments, as a result. I believe her conception of the

project's success is visualized in a larger movement of progress, the *Great Wall* being one of many undertakings that are slowly contributing to her principle of social utopia.

The difficulty endured by public artists is the task of designing a project that requires more than just an audience "looking" in order to comprehend its meaning. In "Culture in Action," the action piece included by Jacob became the travel required to participate in each of the exhibit's smaller works scattered across Chicago's neighborhoods. For Simonds, the action of discovering the *Dwellings* added a blend of excitement and ownership to the sharp pedestrians who spotted the tiny villages. During Baca's stages of development on the *Great Wall*, the action of participation by her Mural Makers and their accompanying narratives made the work come alive. Schork enlivened her goal set in a similar vein as the Mural Crew's creations followed meticulous instructions for assembly. Ahearn shared this participation action by expanding on the notion and immortalizing individuals by casting their body and capturing their personalities.

Placing art in the public sphere is not unique to activist artists, or even the twentieth century. A more recent distinction is the motivation to include community participation in the creative process to such a degree that the artist label has experienced redefinition. That the communities in question are often marginalized and historically excluded from institutional participation further expands the utility of art for engagement. I believe the primary interest in incorporating societal inequity into artwork is the artists' unusual approaches where governmental programs and business calculations have failed. Artists' training in imagery and gift for sight may lead them to discover new solutions to issues of inequality. The set of questions that have emerged from this analysis will aid in guiding artists who are working on

public art projects. Public artwork is an extraordinary instrument for creating thought revolutions, as long as one hits all the right notes.

VI. Appendix

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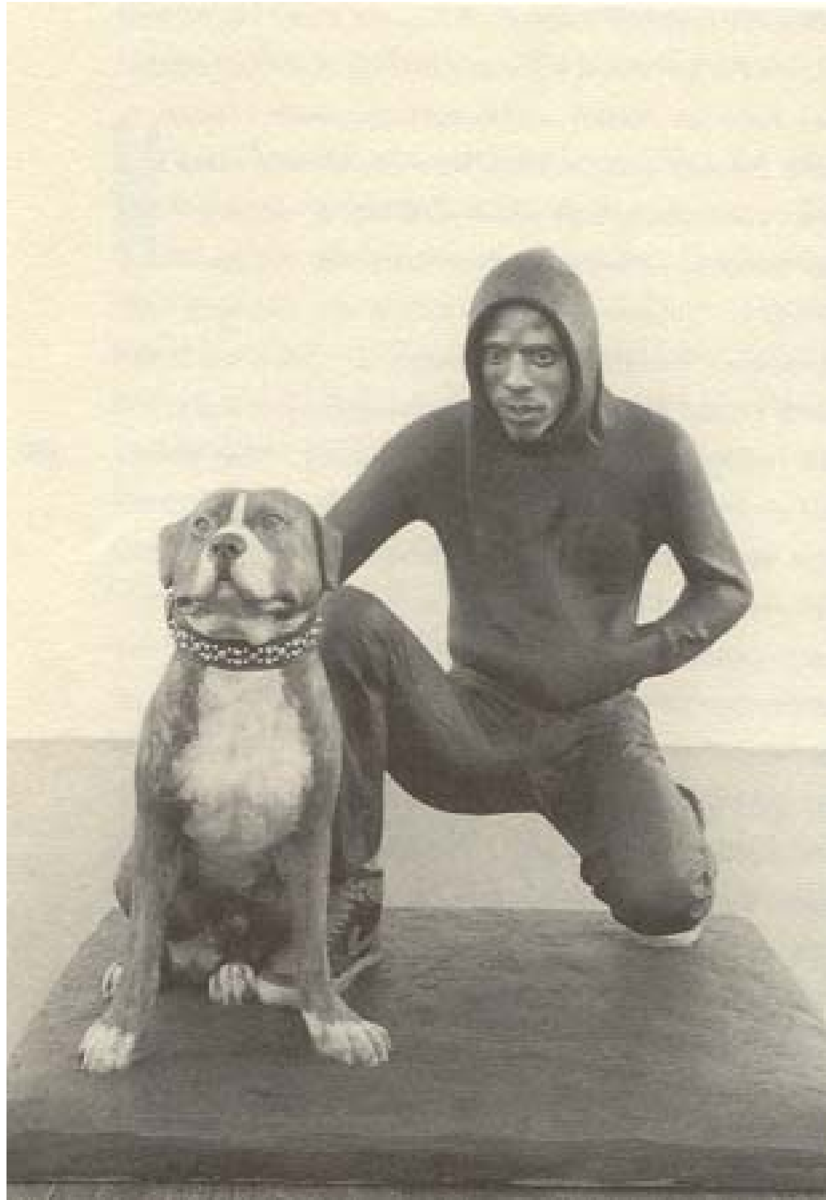

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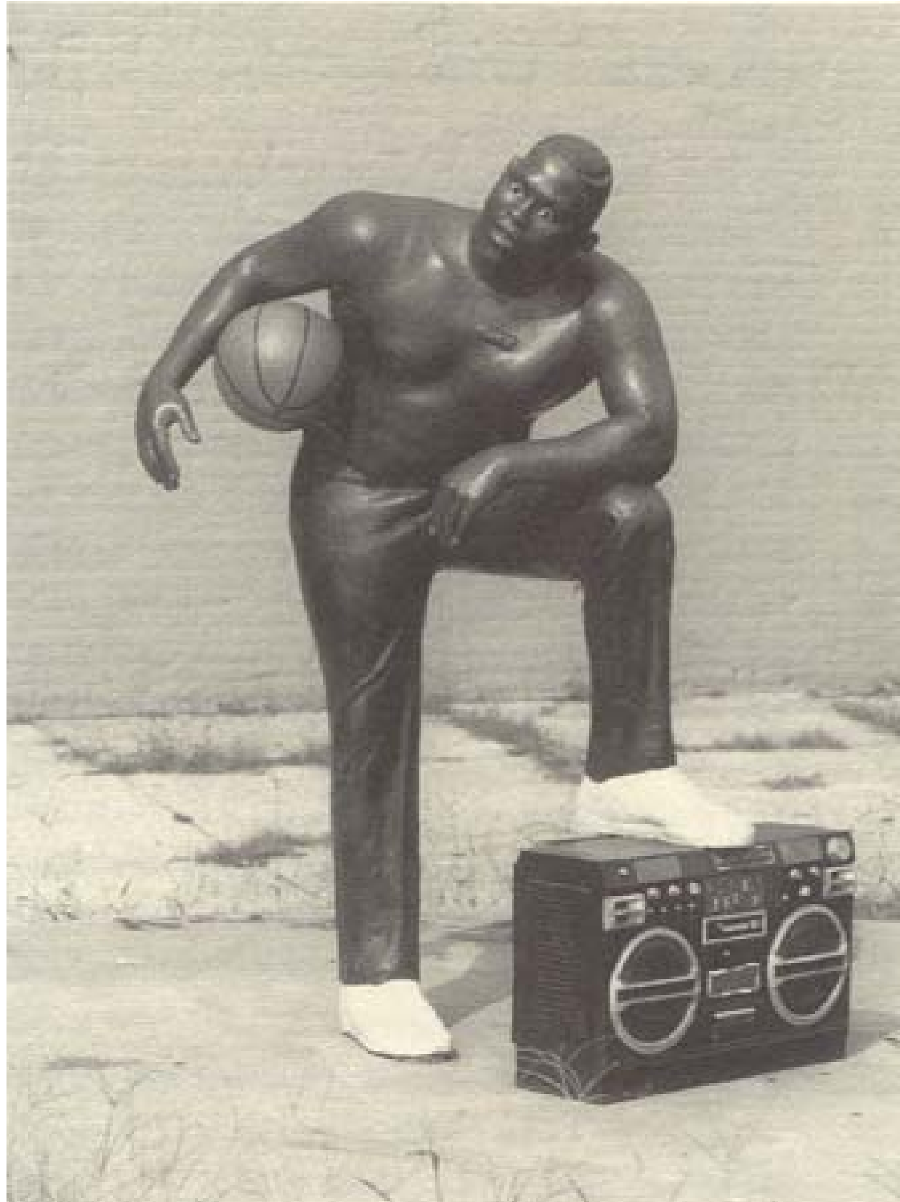

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