

Public Art | Private Views
Exploring Art in Public Spaces in Vancouver

by
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Abstract

The project is a personal exploration of public art in Vancouver consisting of an essay and a DVD comprising three documentaries. Each episode refers to a different question in the paper: What is public art? What is its relationship to where it is situated? What is the process by which it is commissioned in a civic public art program? Artists, curators, and bureaucrats involved in the commission and installation of public art in Vancouver are interviewed; one project's construction is followed to completion. Public art, whether civic or private-sector funded, can be defined as much by its relationship to a site as by its various categorizations, e.g. place-specific, site-specific. Offering local identity, opportunities for dialogue, and creative interpretations of a city's history and culture, Vancouver's public art contends with several challenges, e.g. available land, the value placed on views. Temporary installations and ephemeral art events can resolve some contentious issues.

Keywords: Public art; Ephemeral art; Site-specific art; Place-specific art; Vancouver

Dedication

Twenty years ago I stood on a wharf in West Vancouver and placed a ring on the finger of a woman who—to everyone’s surprise—has remained my steadfast companion, champion, and inspiration. It was her newfound passion as an artist that led to my interest in the GLS program and to explore art in public spaces. The journey was taken together and our collaborative and individual pursuits continue to enrich our partnership.

I also want to dedicate this to my mother, Diana Cox, who has been my close reader for as long as I can remember, and to my sister, Robin Cox, PhD, whose unflagging encouragement and editorial advice was instrumental in completing this project.

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No one knows more about the history and state of public art in Vancouver than the manager of the city's public art program, Bryan Newson, who introduced me to artists and was always enthusiastic about this project. Among the many who gave their encouragement, permissions, and access, I would like to single out Barbara Cole for her comments and responses to requests for information; artists Ken Lum and Liz Magor; curators Bill Jeffries, Barrie Mowatt, Kathleen Ritter, Scott Watson; councillor Heather Deal; Beverley Sinclair, Derek von Essen, and everyone listed in Appendix C who graciously allowed me to interview them.

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DVD References

“Public Art | Private Views: Exploring Art in Public Spaces in Vancouver” comprises this paper and three documentary videos which are published on a single DVD subtitled “SFU Edition – Episodes 1,2,3.” Numbering of the documentary episodes follows the convention PA 2.2, where the first number refers to the episode, the second number to a chapter within that episode.

PA 1. *Köbberling and Kaltwasser build nothing to last* (19:15)

PA 2. *Responding to Site* (26:59)

2.1 Liz Magor: LightShed (4:12)

2.2 Ken Lum: Three works (11:23)

2.3 Lorna Brown and Clint Burnham: Digital Natives (10:59)

PA 3. *Vancouver’s Public Art Program* (16:57)

1. Introduction

My interest in public art was triggered in part by a profusion of outdoor sculptural art and performances that occurred in Vancouver¹ in 2010 and 2011. Over much of 2009 and culminating in February 2010 were art events associated with the 21st Winter Olympics, held in Vancouver, Richmond and Whistler. Following this in 2011 was “Vancouver 125,” a celebration of the city’s incorporation in 1886. Over these three years citizens were exposed to a much wider range of public art than had ever been seen in Vancouver—not even previous signal events such as the 1986 Expo had had as great a variety as the city enjoyed in 2009-2011. There were also annually recurring festivals such as Illuminares, the Parade of Lost Souls, and Park(ing) Day; works of art installed temporarily in and outside the rapid transit Canada Line stations; and the continuation of artworks commissioned for private developments within the city’s public art program. During the same period the Vancouver Sculpture Biennale had its third outdoor exhibition of over thirty works installed primarily in city parks and beaches.

Encountering this profusion of new public art prompted me to question what public art is and how it comes to be placed in the locations it is placed. I was curious about the dialogue between a piece of public art and the space it occupied, how the art changed or influenced the space in which it was located, and how the space changed or influenced the art.

¹ My focus in this project is on the City of Vancouver, not Metro Vancouver, which encompasses 22 municipalities, one electoral area, and one treaty First Nation and has a population of 2.4 million. The City of Vancouver has a population 603,000 (2011 census). (Statistics Canada, 2012. Vancouver, British Columbia census profile. Released 29 May 2012.)

The Project

Both the documentaries and the paper are informed by my reading and the information gathered from the interviews, and by my close observation and filming of public art. The documentaries investigate the subject through an observational process, whereas the essay is more analytical, specifically addressing three research questions:

- What is public art?
- What is the relationship of public art to its site?
- What is the process by which a city acquires, by donation or commission, public art, or in other words how does any single piece of public art come to be in the space it occupies?

Each question is addressed in a separate chapter, and each corresponds to a particular documentary. I have focused throughout this project on *sculptural* public art in Vancouver, while acknowledging that there are other types of permanent public art: murals, mosaics, fabric, light installations, glass; and that the field also includes ephemeral events.

Documentaries

For three decades I had been involved in various aspects of filmmaking, primarily as a technician working on feature films. I left the business when I was accepted into the Graduate Liberal Studies program, but as I thought about researching public art for this project I realized that to engage with this topic as a qualitative researcher I needed to bring myself, and my experience as a filmmaker and a writer into the project to produce a document, this paper, and a documentary film².

² The terms “video,” “videographer,” “film” and “filmmaker” are now commonly interchangeable; the distinction between recording images and sound on magnetic tape, digital media and by photo-chemical processes have become blurred with the convergence of technologies. In this project I refer to myself as a filmmaker, where the recording media was initially tape, then I switched to digital media; the recordings were transferred to hard drives, and the final product submitted to the library on a DVD as well as being made available online.

As I owned the camera(s) and had no crew, except for one day when I had a second camera operator, I was able to shoot unhindered by scheduling concerns over crew availability; a further advantage of a one-person crew using a small camera was that my filming did not attract undue attention. The interviews were set up so that I could talk to the subject and basically “ignore” the camera, a technique I found particularly useful for people who were uncomfortable in front of the lens.

Filming took place intermittently over twenty-one months, from May 2010 through January 2012. I recorded a wide range of public art that included three-dimensional works, temporary installations and ephemeral performances. After interviewing twenty-one artists,³ twelve curators, a religion journalist, an arts policy consultant, a choreographer, two non-profit directors, a community activist, two politicians, three civic public art managers, three developers, two architects, a head gardener, a design student and a native hip-hop singer, the CEO of a subway system, an arts contractor, a digital illumination technician, a documentary filmmaker, as well as uncredited interviews with installation volunteers and paid labourers—nearly sixty hour-long interviews at the time of writing—I faced the challenge inherent in any editing process: how to shape the material into a single film. Would the interviews be intercut with “B roll” of artworks,⁴ or would the interviews be kept full-length, more of an appendix to the paper, which was my original intent. And would the resulting 100-minute film hold interest and present the wide range of topics covered in my interviews? I thought a better way to present the information was to break it into thematic episodes, each approximately twenty minutes long, which would also be more useful for subsequent library and classroom use. There would be nine episodes in all, of which the first three comprise this MA project on one DVD⁵. Concurrent with the shooting I was reading extensively in the literature on public art and writing this paper, thus the documentaries and the paper are complements to

³ Appendix C is a complete list of interviewees. Not all interviews were recorded on video, and this paper occasionally cites interviews not presented on the accompanying DVD. Appendix D is a list of the art and artists depicted in each documentary.

⁴ “A-roll” is interviews, “B-roll” includes the images to support the interviews.

⁵ Michael Cox, *Public Art | Private Views: SFU Edition – Episodes 1,2,3*, (Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University, 2012), DVD. Further references to the DVD are shortened to PA #.

one another, the product of my two-year research project. Although a full discussion of the difference between what I mean by documentary and documentation is not possible in this paper, I shall briefly address my philosophical position in making these films.

Documentary versus Documentation

Public art as a field of scholarly concern and as we understand it today, a commissioning process for civic and private-sector public art regulated by government agencies, is primarily a 20th century phenomenon.⁶ It is interesting to note that its emergence as a major field within the art world paralleled the development of still and motion picture documentation. In many cases the documentation of a work is all that remains—as with the published collections of sketches, plans, photographs, video, and other documentation of Jean-Claude and Christo’s fabric works.⁷

Whereas pictorial *documentation* attempts to be as accurate and objective as possible in its recording of events from an objective stance, whether still or moving images, a *documentary* such as mine involves the creative interpretation of the subject, while at the same time hewing to an honest representation. This does not mean a documentary is unbiased or cannot have a point of view but that, ideally, the documentarian has not misrepresented the subject. I make the distinction between documentation and documentary to be clear that this project is the latter, a personal interpretation of public art, even though it may appear to be documentation. Filmmaker Errol Morris, writing about photography’s propensity to hide as much as it reveals, cautions that “some of the most vexing issues in photography—about posing, about the intentions of the photographer, about the nature of photographic evidence” come down to “the relationship between photographs and reality.”⁸

⁶ Cameron Cartiere, Rosemary Shirley and Shelly Willis, “A Timeline for the History of Public Art” in Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis, *The Practice of Public Art* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 231-246.

⁷ For instance, see Christo and Jeanne-Claude website. <http://www.christojeanneclaude.net/>

⁸ Errol Morris, *Believing Is Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 67.

The presumption that a documentary film is an objective record of reality has been found invalid by a number of factors: the influence of the camera and crew on the subject; the subjects' and/or director's manipulation of the situation to suit an agenda; the temporal reduction by editing of real time to film time; the imposition of a narrative structure; the intercutting of one element with another. These issues have been discussed at great length by Elizabeth Cowie (2011), Errol Morris (2011), Bill Nichols (1991), Vinicius Navarro and Louise Spence (2011), Dai Vaughn (1999), and Brian Winston (1995, 2008), and are the subject of a previous paper I have written.⁹ Richard Barsam speaks of the "multiple ambiguities" of reality, citing Jay Ruby's contention that "all films, whether they are labeled fiction, documentary or art—are created structured articulations of the filmmaker and not authentic truthful objective records."¹⁰ I am not stating this as a caution with regard to the work presented here, rather to note that my aesthetic choices, influenced and shaped by my reaction to the art, play a part in the documentaries.

In the second episode, "Responding to Site" PA 2.1, Liz Magor's *LightShed* is shown as a mysterious object at night, with subtle shifts of light within the work fading up and down. It is also depicted in daylight, using both stable tripod shots and tracking handheld shots which move continually under and around the sculpture. The edited choices result in a potentially different evocation for someone viewing my filmic presentation of the art than they would have in a direct, unmediated experience of it on the seawall. In the third episode, "Vancouver's Public Art Program" PA 3, I show Henry Moore's *Knife Edge Two-Piece* with a playful swoop of the camera over its surface, rather than using a wide shot encompassing the entire work. I can make the claim that this is the visual equivalent of a tactile examination, but I don't claim to represent or document the object in its entirety, and the same goes for all the art works in the series. Truth or veracity of representation was not my goal. The documentaries are an exploration which reflects my aesthetic sensibilities as a filmmaker and my scholarly

⁹ Michael Cox, "The Variability of Veracity: Toward a Re-Definition of Documentary" (essay, Simon Fraser University, 2010).

¹⁰ Richard M. Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film. A Critical History* (Indiana University Press, 1992), 376.

research public art and its role and presence in our modern cities. The documentaries represent the culmination of my investigative process as a filmmaker, while the accompanying essay offers a more analytic approach.

Essay

Chapter 2 provides a brief chronology of civic public art. *Art in a City*¹¹ by John Willett was the first published study of a city's civic art. An assistant editor of the Times Literary Supplement, Willett was commissioned in 1962 by Liverpool's Blue Coat Society of Art to report on the state of the city's public art, with the resulting research "far exceed[ing] expectations."¹² I take his study as my starting point to outline the evolution of public art in Britain, the United States, and Canada, with a more detailed look at the history of Vancouver's public art, some of the early works acquired by the city, and the adoption of a public art program.

Chapter 3 is a review of the idea of "the public" and "public space" and how I understand these terms specifically in the context of Vancouver and its public art, but this is not a fully-fledged discussion of the history or theories of the work of Jurgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt and Nancy Fraser; rather, I relied on their essays and excerpts published in the compilation by Jostein Gripsrud et al., *The Idea of the Public Sphere*.¹³ The next three chapters tackle each of my research questions.

In Chapter 4, "What is Public Art?" I first cite Cartiere's definition in which a work must meet at least one of four conditions to be considered public art. Public art is not art in a museum, but it can be art in a corporate or civic location which is nominally open to the public at large.

¹¹ John Willett, *Art in a City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1967/2007)

¹² Bryan Biggs, "Introduction" in Willett, ix.

¹³ Jostein Gripsrud, Hallvard Mmoe, Anders Molander, and Graham Murdock, eds., *The Idea of the Public Sphere: A Reader* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010).

The chapter corresponds to the documentary episode “Köbberling and Kaltwasser build nothing to last,” PA 1. The film is complementary to the paper, in that rather than categorically answer this question through interviews and a montage of art works, I followed the creation of a single work, built in public, over three months. Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser, known for their work with recycled materials,¹⁴ were invited by curator Barbara Cole of Other Sights for Artists’ Projects to construct something from leftover materials from the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. In following the process of its construction, we see some of the challenges artists face in public art commissions, the compromises they must make to realize its completion, and we hear each artist discuss the personal sacrifices they make for their art, and their rationale for making art. These insights into the artistic process provide one part of the answer to the question about what public art is.

Art-making is complex in that *from the artist’s perspective* it is not necessarily about the end product, but about the process of inspiration, invention, experimentation, failure, revision, and execution, as Liz Magor states:

I don’t think of art as pointing to teach. I think art is the result of the world pointing to the art. The world calls out what it is and the artist responds to that call-out, rather than the artist saying ‘I know something, I am going to...tell you this or that.’ ...I don’t even think it’s my role to provoke. It’s my role to look and see other things that are a little bit invisible as we stand here. All those things are visible to everybody, so in a way everybody can operate as an artist...I don’t have special vision or anything, I’m just more devoted...by my profession.¹⁵

I then rely on Cartiere’s “Further-expanded Field”¹⁶ which categorizes some types of public art, but not all, in a matrix showing the relationships between typologies.

¹⁴ See <http://www.superbuero.de/>

¹⁵ Liz Magor, interview by author, 4 January 2011, PA 2.1. Except where otherwise noted, all interviews were by author, recorded to video and transcribed.

¹⁶ Cartiere and Willis, *Practice*, 11-13, and Cartiere, *Re/Placing Public Art: The Role of Place-specificity in New Genre Public Art* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co., 2010).

After relating these to some of the works I filmed, I explain how and why I also chose to use a second method of categorizing public art, based on its relational qualities, and list those.

Chapter 5, “Place, site and art,” builds on the previous chapter’s discussion of types of art: here I draw on a number of works in Vancouver to explore the question of how public art is related to, or interacts with, where it is installed. I relate this discussion to the second episode, “Responding to Site,” PA 2, which is in three parts. I explore the difference between the terms “place-specific” and “site-specific” art as drawn from the work of Cameron Cartiere to distinguish between works built/installed in reference to a site’s sociality, history or cultural significance, which are *place-specific*, and those works built/installed at, on, or in a site which reference the site’s topography, utilizing its unique features, which are *site-specific*. As PA 2 is divided into three parts corresponding to two artists and a team of curators, the chapter discusses each in turn:

Liz Magor’s *LightShed*, installed on the seawall in Coal Harbour, is a particularly good local example of a place-specific work as it references the once ubiquitous work sheds which lined Vancouver’s inner harbour industrial shoreline prior to its redevelopment.

Three works by Ken Lum follow. The first two respond specifically to where they are situated and are included as different aspects of place-specific works. *Four Boats Stranded, Red and Yellow, Black and White* is installed on the roof of the Vancouver Art Gallery, formerly the Supreme Court of B.C.; each boat refers to a specific period in the province’s history and to an interaction between cultures, while the work itself references the former jurisprudential role of the court in land claim and immigration cases. *Monument for East Vancouver* was installed at a nondescript corner of a mostly post-industrial area in east Vancouver, marking the site with a symbol once used by east side gangs. This second work has *become* place-specific, but it was not built for the site it now stands on. The third Ken Lum work, *From Shangri-la to Shangri-la*, is examined as an example of a work referencing a site, but the site is distant from the work’s location. The installation was designed as an homage to, or an ironic reminder of, a site on the North Shore of the inner harbour where squatters shacks once stood, while the art work itself was situated next to the city’s tallest high rise.

Finally, I look at a work by curators Lorna Brown and Clint Burnham, the *Digital Natives* project, which was a temporary installation in April 2011 which utilized an electronic billboard standing on a sliver of First Nations land at the south end of the Burrard Street Bridge to present abbreviated text messages about indigenous issues, categorizing it .

Chapter 6 outlines the processes by which public art is commissioned in Vancouver, including the options available to developers, whose permit for a redevelopment triggers the public art process. Vancouver is unique among most North American cities in that the City doesn't have a "percent for art" program for its own capital development, but rather requires developments over a certain size to contribute an amount based on the square footage of the development. The City's own public art program is funded as a line item in the annual civic budget. I refer throughout to my interviews and emails with Bryan Newson, the city's manager of public art, who also narrates much of the third episode, "Vancouver's Public Art Program," PA 3. I end by noting several of the challenges facing those planning to install public art in Vancouver: competing interests for views of the natural surroundings; maintenance; weather; and the availability of land for art. Perhaps, I suggest, a sculpture park might be an answer to some of the issues around competing demands for what Newson calls "our diminishing stock of public space."¹⁷

Chapter 7 reflects on my personal exploration of public art and distillation of what I learned through making the documentaries. What does public art mean to me, and where does it fit in to my understanding of the civic realm?

Harriet Senie states that "with its built-in social focus, public art would seem to be an ideal genre for a democracy. Yet, since its inception, issues surrounding its appropriate form and placement, as well as its funding, have made it an object of

¹⁷ Bryan Newson, interview, 11 October 2010, PA 3.

controversy more often than a subject for consensus or celebration.”¹⁸ She is writing about a specifically American context, but similar concerns are raised elsewhere, certainly in the U.K. as Sara Selwood notes:

The commissioning of public art...raises issues about the contribution of public art to public good; whether public art necessarily constitutes good art; if working in or for the public realm necessitates compromising the artistic integrity of the artist; whether public art is an environmental improver; what the nature of its relationship to the built environment is; what contributions artists have to offer over and above those of other professionals, and whether public art is educational and if so, in what ways?¹⁹

I only address three questions in this MA project, but some of the other points Selwood raises are included in the ensuing discussion. To begin with, I give a short chronology of the field of public art, which enfolds within it art made long before there were any bureaucratic overseers of art installed in public places, or of scholarly writing on the subject, which began with a report on Liverpool’s public art in the early 1960’s.

¹⁸ Harriet Senie, *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), xi.

¹⁹ Sara Selwood, *The Benefits of Public Art: The polemics of permanent art in public places* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1995), xvi.

2. A Short Chronology of Public Art

The oldest and commonest social use for art, once the magic and the sanctity had gone out of it, was to symbolize and celebrate: a religious figure or idea, a ruler, a military victory or, with Jacques-Louis David after 1789, a popular revolution....[which] later became inextricably bound up with that of art as a moral force. John Willett.²⁰

A city's aesthetic landscape is a palimpsest of political, commercial and bureaucratic decisions taken over decades, or centuries, before the emergence of contemporary policies for the regulation and implementation of a public art program. "Throughout history," Marilyn Stokstad writes, "works of art have been placed in public spaces to address a broad audience. Prior to the modernist period, works of public art often served to honour a hero, commemorate an important event, or celebrate widely shared social or religious values and were normally readily understandable to the public."²¹ But modernity and its focus on the individual, as Hilda Hein points out, made the "monolithic cultural assumptions implicit in Roman forum statuary...or even the typical town square equestrian statue...no longer viable,"²² a point echoed by curator Scott Watson in his interview, that we need to get over our "monumental hangover" of large-scale sculptures.²³

This brief survey begins in England because that is where we find the first published survey of art in public spaces, by John Willett.

²⁰ John Willett, *Art in a City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1967/2007), 221.

²¹ Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History* 2nd ed. (New York: Harry N.Abrams, 2002), 1177.

²² Hilda Hein, "What is public art? Time, place, and meaning," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 no.1 (1996): 2.

²³ Scott Watson, interview 13 October 2011, PA 3.

England

Willett, an assistant editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, was commissioned in 1962 by Liverpool's Blue Coat Society of Art to report on the state of the city's art. The resulting survey and book, *Art in a City*, is a comprehensive examination of the existing publicly-viewable art in 1960's Liverpool. Of the public sculpture, which, for the most part, Willett found was "designed to commemorate rather than to beautify,"²⁴ most of the city's sculptures were "funereal," ignored by most of the citizenry "who neither know or care who such statues are by."²⁵ As with most cities in England that had benefited from the Industrial Revolution, Liverpool remained, in the sixties, a "dismal" place with little aesthetic appeal. "It is no good," Willett says, "pretending that the visual climate of modern Liverpool is exciting,"²⁶ for which he blames "the shortage of inspiration among recent generations of Liverpool-based architects" and, perhaps more telling, "the willing acceptance by most sections of society of a very poor standard of design."²⁷ Clearing slums was one thing, stimulating interest in the city by installing art in public places was quite another as there was no model, no procedural handbook, to follow. "The result," Willett writes of 1960's Liverpool, "is that potential patrons and officials in our cities, and artists and architects too, not only are hamstrung by ignorance of the possible methods and mistakes, but are largely unaware of those achievements which justify public art today."²⁸

In the U.K. in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a publicly-sited sculpture was primarily a political act in which the power of the state was expressed not only in *who* was represented but in *how* that commemoration was presented: most often elevated on a podium, centrally located, with space around in the form of a plaza or roundabout. In 1928, Henry Moore was one of seven sculptors commissioned to create works for the

²⁴ Willett, 92.

²⁵ Ibid, 91.

²⁶ Ibid, 102.

²⁷ Ibid, 102

²⁸ Willett, 109.

Underground station at St. James: Moore's relief carving, *West Wind*,²⁹ was his first public commission. In 1951 the *Festival of Britain* installed temporary sculptures along London's South Bank which played "a substantial role in introducing modern sculpture into the public sphere."³⁰ The founding of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1945, and the subsequent implementation of local agencies, museums and non-profit societies who commissioned public art, carried forward what Malcolm Miles argues were "the products of nineteenth-century liberal reformism" into the public realm, which sought to educate and "raise up" the working class through exposure to art.³¹

This edifying rationale for public art had now been commodified to fit civic and private development agendas. Sara Selwood's study of public art in the U.K., drawing on permanent works installed between 1978 and 1991,³² suggests that any claim that contemporary public art bolstered civic identity and local economies by creating new audiences for art, or increased local investment by the art's promotional or aesthetic appeal, "were infrequently substantiated."³³ Subsidy of the arts in the U.K., and from this we can assume public art to be included, was seen as a means of "regeneration of de-industrialized cities in a world of increased mobility of capital and fluidity of labor markets" whereby "culturally led redevelopment is now the norm," Miles wrote in another article.³⁴ The democratization of art, the decentralization of art-making into communities, has been a hallmark of recent public art processes, particularly in the U.S. with what would be termed "new genre public art" by Suzanne Lacy in *Mapping the Terrain: New*

²⁹ Henry Moore website, *Works in Public*, <http://henry-moore.org>. Also Richard Cork describes his meeting Moore at his home studio and discussing *West Wind*. Richard Cork, "Hitlers, mothers, navelgazing..." *The Independent* 14 February 2010.

³⁰ Cameron Cartiere, Rosemary Shirley, Shelly Willis, "A Timeline for the History of Public Art," in Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis, eds., *The Practice of Public Art* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 233.

³¹ Malcolm Miles, "Critical Spaces: Monuments and Changes," in Cartiere (2008), 72.

³² Sara Selwood, *The Benefits of Public Art* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1995), xvii

³³ Selwood: xix.

³⁴ Malcolm Miles, "The Culture Industries: Symbolic Economies and Critical Practices" in Judith Kapferer, ed., *The State and the Arts: Articulating Power and Subversion* (New York: Berghan, 2008), 99.

Genre Public Art,³⁵ that is, a politically-charged art which is primarily about engagement with and within a community.

The U.S.

“For some scholars, public art has been with us since the dawn of recorded history,” Cameron Cartiere writes, while “...others could argue that public art was not a recognized practice until 1967, when the National Endowment for the Arts created its Art in Public Places program.”³⁶ Cartiere and Knight separately suggest that public art as a recognized responsibility of government funding may be said to have begun in 1935, when the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration), a U.S. federal response to the widespread unemployment during the Great Depression, put artists to work on many federal buildings with the Federal Art Project, but “even this date might be contested, as President Roosevelt had made several attempts prior to the F.A.P. to provide employment for artists on relief, namely the Public Works of Art Project...which operated from 1933 to 1934.”³⁷ The F.A.P. ran until 1943.³⁸ Individual public art works in the U.S. go back further: we see in Cartiere, Shirley and Willis’s helpful “Timeline” that Sabato Simon Rodia was building *Nuestra Puebla*, known as *Watts Tower*, in Los Angeles in 1921, a personal project he completed in 1954; in 1960-61 “the Isamu Noguchi Sculpture Group [was] commissioned to design the entire exterior plaza of the First National City Bank Building Plaza” in Forth Worth, Texas.³⁹

The urban programming of public art organized as a civic department began in Philadelphia in 1959, and in 1967 the National Endowment for the Arts commissioned its

³⁵ Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: new genre public art*, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995); also cited in Lacy, “Time in Place: New Genre Public Art a Decade Later,” in Cartiere and Willis, 18-32.

³⁶ Cameron Cartiere, “Coming in From the Cold,” in Cartiere and Willis, *Practice*, 8

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Chere Krause-Knight, *Public Art. Theory, Practice and Populism* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 4.

³⁹ Cartiere et al, “Timeline,” in Cartiere and Willis, *Practice*, 234.

first public art grant to Alexander Calder for *La Grande Vitesse* in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The work was roundly criticized at first, but later became a symbol the city proudly displayed on its stationery and the sides of public works vehicles, a refrain simultaneously played out in Chicago with the 15 meter tall, untitled public sculpture by Picasso, 1967.⁴⁰ By the mid-70's a number of cities in North America had begun some form of public art program: Seattle in 1973, New York in 1977, and Chicago in 1978. Canadian cities only began to recognize the social, economic and political advantages of organizing and commissioning public art in the decade following.

Canada

A bust of King George III, installed near the Église Notre-Dame in Montreal's Place-d'Armes in 1773 was perhaps Canada's first public art. It was "repeatedly vandalised with painted graffiti," particularly by the English who were incensed by the Quebec Act in 1775; it disappeared during the invasion by American soldiers the following winter, only to be recovered in a well, some sixty years later.⁴¹ Non-representative art installed outdoors became more evident during the 1967 Centennial celebrations nationwide, the focal point of which was Montreal's Exposition.⁴² A decade later in Montreal there was three large-scale public art exhibits accompanying the 1976 Summer Olympic Games: Artisinage, Corridart, and Mosaicart.⁴³ A fortnight prior to the opening of the Games, twenty-two large sculptures by Quebec artists of "international credentials" were installed along Sherbrooke Street for Corridart, but in an extraordinary demonstration of the perceived "threat" of public art to public morals, and of his own

⁴⁰ Cameron Cartiere (lecture, Lulu Series, Richmond B.C., 10 March 2011).

⁴¹ Annie Gérin, "Introduction: Off Base," in Annie Gérin and James McLean, eds., *Public art in Canada: critical perspectives* (University of Toronto, 2009), 3.

⁴² Much of the work commissioned by or purchased for the exposition is now installed in Parc Jean-Drapeau (named after the then-mayor), the former Expo site on Île Sainte-Hélène et Notre-Dame.

⁴³ Susan Spier, "Montreal Summer Olympics 1976," *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Foundation, 2011), <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/olympics>.

near-dictatorial power, Mayor Jean-Drapeau ordered all the sculptures removed three days prior to the Games' opening, and civic workers, with police protection, de-installed them late at night.⁴⁴ It wasn't until 1989 that Montréal instituted a formal public art program, principally to deal with the legacy of art from the 1967 and 1976 events.

Toronto's public art program began informally in 1966 with the installation of Henry Moore's *Three-Way Piece Number Two: Archer* by Viljo Revell, the architect who designed the new city hall. The city's councillors thought the sculpture a waste of taxpayer's money, refusing to allocate funds to it, and it was only by the persistence of the mayor, Phillip Givens, raising funds by subscription, that it was installed. Moore, grateful for this support, willed his remaining unsold works at the time of his death to Toronto, where the AGO houses the largest collection of the artist's work anywhere.⁴⁵

Across the country, as cities perceived local advantages to public art, various initiatives were adopted: Winnipeg, after recommendations in a 1997 Cultural Policy Review, developed a public art policy in 2002 which was formally adopted and funded in 2004. Managed by a city staff member, it is overseen by a volunteer Public Art Committee. Edmonton established what it calls the "Percent for Art to Provide and Encourage Art in Public Areas" policy in 1991, revising it in 2007, while Calgary didn't begin one until 2003, reviewing and amending its public art program to ensure sustainability and relevance in 2008.⁴⁶ Vancouver city council formalized a public art program in 1990, which I go into more detail about below.

⁴⁴ Annie Gérin, 4.

⁴⁵ Matthew Kupfer, "Public exposure: a short history of public art in Toronto," *The Varsity* (January 20, 2010), <http://thevarsity.ca>.

⁴⁶ Dates for each city were found on the websites for: Winnipeg Arts Council; Edmonton Arts Council; Calgary Public Art Program.

Vancouver

The City of Vancouver was “well behind” other North American cities when it came to initiating a public art program, as Bryan Newson, the Manager of the Public Art Program, tells us in “Vancouver’s Public Art Program,” PA 3. Up to the late 1980’s art had been acquired on an ad hoc basis, mostly by donations to the City by various individuals and corporations, as well as earlier commissioned works for civic infrastructure.

Public art acquired prior to 1990

The earliest non-figurative work in Vancouver includes the art deco ornamentation of the Marine Building (1930); Bertram C. Binning’s 4 by 13.5 meter mosaic, *B.C. Beginning* (1958), which was installed at the back of a bank, now a Shoppers Drug Mart at 586 Granville Street; two Haida mortuary poles⁴⁷ carved by Bill Reid and Doug Cranmer at the Museum of Anthropology (1960-62); Robert Murray’s Corten steel *Cumbria* at UBC (1966); and George Norris’s stainless steel *Crab* fountain (1968) in front of the H.R. MacMillan Planetarium. The city has no public works by Bourgeois, Calder, Gormley, Hatoum, Kapoor, Picasso, Serra, or Whitread, but it does have its own Henry Moore, *Knife Edge Two-Piece* (1969), installed atop the city’s main drinking water reservoir at Queen Elizabeth Park, donated by lumber baron Prentice Bloedel.

Much of the early public art inventory was created by the prolific sculptor Charles Marega: a bust of the second mayor, David Oppenheimer (1911); the caryatids atop the Sun Tower (1912); a memorial to U.S President Warren Harding in Stanley Park (1925), commemorating the first visit of an American president to Canada; a drinking fountain honouring Joe Fortes, the city’s first lifeguard (1926); the figureheads of Captains Harry

⁴⁷ Missing from this survey, and from my documentary, with one notable exception, is any discussion of aboriginal art. Aboriginal art, whether totemic or practical, created prior to the mid-20th century, was not created as “public art.” The exception being the work *Digital Natives* curated by Clint Burnham and Lorna Brown in 2010-2011, PA 2.3.

Burrard and George Vancouver on the Burrard Street Bridge (1932); and a full-length statue of Captain George Vancouver (1936); and the lions at the north entrance to the Lions Gate Bridge (1939). Other historical monuments include a statue of Lord Stanley, Canada's Governor General in the late 1880's, standing at the pedestrian entrance to Stanley Park, and nearby, a non-functioning drinking fountain in honour of Queen Victoria, and a relief carved into a boulder honouring Pauline Johnson, poet, near the Tea House Restaurant at Third Beach.⁴⁸

Seattle artist George Tsutakawa installed *Fountain of the Pioneers* (1969) outside the first of the Bentall towers on Burrard Street, a work that has stood up well against more recent fountains. *Search* (1975), a popular bronze sculpture by J. Seward Johnson (1975), depicts an elderly woman seated on a bench, looking through her purse. Sited at the northwest corner of Denman and Georgia in Devonian Harbour Park, more often than not one sees a small bouquet of fresh flowers stuck into the purse. The same artist is also responsible for *Photo Session* (1984), a two-part figurative work depicting a family having its portrait taken against the city's skyline by a man holding an Instamatic camera. It is located in Queen Elizabeth Park one hundred meters north of the Henry Moore at a viewpoint overlooking the city—situated where many tourists take their holiday photos of the city *and* the sculpture, repeating the referent. In 1975 the city hosted an international Stone Sculpture Symposium, the legacy of which includes several works placed around Van Dusen Gardens, a horticultural park, including works by David Marshall, Olga Janic, Hiromi Akiyama, Jiro Sugawara, and Michael Prentice. These works, and many others, had been placed around the city long before the establishment of a public art program, triggered by the 1986 world's fair, celebrating Vancouver's 100th anniversary of incorporation.

⁴⁸ All dates were retrieved from Vancouver's Public Art Registry, http://app.vancouver.ca/PublicArt_Net/>, and John Steil & Aileen Stalker, *Public Art in Vancouver: Angels Among Lions* (Surrey B.C.: Touchwood Editions, 2009).

Expo '86

After hosting Expo '86, the city was faced with donations of several large artworks by the national pavilions. “[We] had no way of dealing with these,” Bryan Newson, the city’s Manager of Public Art told me. “We didn’t know whether they would require maintenance,...whether they were any good...[or] artistic. They raised all sorts of questions which the city, up to that time, hadn’t really found a way to address. The then-mayor appointed a committee with expertise in art, architecture, and landscape architecture, and said—you go away and deal with this stuff.”⁴⁹ One of the key questions they had to answer was “do these works merit long-term placement on a diminishing stock of public space,” which is even more relevant today.

At the conclusion of the exposition, the entire 70-hectare site was sold to a Hong Kong-based developer, Concord Pacific, which would, over the ensuing two decades, build over thirty high rise condominium towers along the north shore of False Creek, along with parks and a continuation of the seawall pedestrian path. The art from the fair that the city decided to keep included: Alvin Kanak’s *Inukshuk* from the Northwest Territories pavilion, which was moved to English Bay; *China Gate*, which was donated to the city by the People’s Republic and installed on Pender Street in Chinatown—but had to be replaced in 2005 with a marble one, designed by Shu Ren Cheng, because the original was not designed for permanent installation; two popular sculptures, *Highway 86*, a rolling section of road upon which were various transportation devices painted a uniform grey (S.I.T.E. Projects, New York), and William Lishman’s untitled, 86-foot-high tower surrounded by a spiral of cars, auto parts and human figures, were dismantled.⁵⁰ The city had replaced the old wooden Connaught (Cambie) swing-bridge, built in 1911, with a new bridge for the exposition, and the engineers retained an 8-meter gear from

⁴⁹ Bryan Newson interview, 11 October 2010, PA 3.

⁵⁰ Steil and Stalker. See also <http://bobbea.com/expo-86/index2.html>.

the moveable section of the old bridge to install it along the newly constructed Pacific Boulevard, turning it into public art.⁵¹

Public Art acquired after 1990

Following Expo '86, the city's Cultural Services department created the position of Manager for Public Art and recommended the formation of a committee to be comprised of two artists of recognized standing, three other arts professionals, two urban designers and one member of the community. The recommendation was accepted by the Board of Parks and Recreation⁵² in 1989, and one year later by city council.⁵³ However, Newson says, "developing a public art program was something everybody wanted, but it wasn't very high on the cultural services register of the day," and for a long time it was run ad hoc by Newson and planners Stewart Backerman (replaced by Burke Taylor in 1998) and Alice Navinski.

"The Public Art Program is about finding places in the city for art. It is also about the protection of public space, which is under constant pressure—commercial pressure, pressure from special interest groups," Newson told me. Because it was late coming to a public art program, Vancouver was able to look at what had worked and what didn't work in other cities, using Portland, Seattle and Toronto's programs as models. "So we were able to start at a fairly sophisticated place," Newson said, adding, that the program has evolved over the years and now looks at a broader picture, "a larger conversation about how you make a creative city, how you make spaces, places, and opportunities for artists that are inviting,...and meaningful."⁵⁴ This means bringing artists in as early as

⁵¹ This, and most of the public art in Vancouver, is catalogued on the city's Public Art Registry website: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/cultural/publicart/civic/index.htm>.

⁵² Vancouver's parks, beaches, "public" golf courses, community centres and arenas are under the control of an elected board, which receives funding from the city and from various entrance and parking fees. The city has 1,298 hectares of parkland. Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, <http://vancouver.ca/parks/info/aboutus/index.htm>.

⁵³ Following this, a Public Art Committee was created in By-Law No. 6870, "A Bylaw to create an advisory body on 'Public Art,' passed 13 August 1991.

⁵⁴ Newson, PA 3.

possible into the planning and development processes, rather than tacking on a work after a project has been planned or completed. There has been a movement, Newson said, “away from the notion of a ‘plop art’ piece to artworks that really are very much about their place...[that are] site-dependent...or site-specific,...[and] most of the best work in Vancouver has a very intimate relationship with its space and some of that work could not survive away from its space.”⁵⁵

As of mid-2011, there were over 450 artworks funded by the city or various private developments installed in the city. The exact number is hard to come by since the art inventory is currently being updated.⁵⁶ As noted in the first chapter, the twenty months I was shooting the documentary was a busy time for public art: the Vancouver International Sculpture Biennale, a non-profit society, completed its second exhibition⁵⁷ (2009-2011) with works by forty artists; the 2010 Cultural Olympiad resulted in several legacy installations: in the former Olympic athletes village, *The Birds* (Myfanwy Macleod); at the entrance to Stanley Park, *Aerodynamic Forms in Space* (Rodney Graham); in front of the public library’s main branch, *The Words Don’t Fit the Picture* (Ron Terada); underneath the Cambie Street Bridge, *Garde-Temps* (Tania Ruiz Gutiérrez) and an LED illumination of city hall, *Ice Light* (Gunda Förster).

It was impossible to keep up with the installations of public art: in September 2011, a large LED installation by Dutch artist Tamar Frank was revealed on the facades of two new condominium towers in the densely populated West End, which caused local distress by neighbours annoyed by the intrusion of moving, multi-hued lights into suites adjoining or facing the towers.⁵⁸ Interviewing the artist when she came back to Vancouver to work on another project, she told me she had had to reprogram the lighting

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Chisaki Muraki-Valdovinos, Cultural Services, City of Vancouver, emails to author, 19 October and 29 November, 2011.

⁵⁷ There were earlier incarnations of the open-air sculpture exhibit sponsored by the Buschlen Mowatt Galleries in 1998 and 2000; the first official Biennale was 2005-2007.

⁵⁸ Kevin Griffin, “Tamar Frank: Negative Reaction Overwhelms Dutch Artist,” *Culture Seen* blog, *Vancouver Sun*, 27 September 2011, <http://blogs.vancouver.sun.com/2011/09/27/tamar-frank-negative-reaction-overwhelms-dutch-artist/>

to appease the area's residents, lowering its intensity and having it shut off a few hours after sundown.⁵⁹

There was a new memorial work which, by the time of this writing, would be installed in Harbour Green Park: donated to the city by the Khalsa Diwan Society, and funded "through the Historical Recognition Program administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada,"⁶⁰ the installation commemorates the 1914 *Komagatu Maru* incident, in which a ship of Asian refugees was refused docking and disembarking rights by the civic, provincial and federal governments, an event previously referenced in art by one of the boats in Ken Lum's *Four Boats Stranded, Red and Yellow, Black and White* (2001) atop the Vancouver Art Gallery.

As I shot art in public spaces I was concurrently reading many of the important texts about public art, in an attempt to understand what public art is, and is not. I explore this question in the next two chapters, first with an examination of what is meant by the terms "public" and "public space," then in Chapter 4 I explore how the creation of a single work helped me to define public art as being as much about process as it is about the product of the process.

⁵⁹ Tamar Frank, interview with author, 14 May 2012, audio recording.

⁶⁰ Jill P. Weaving [sic], Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 16 February 2011, staff recommendation to proceed with donation of artwork, <http://vancouver.ca/parks/board/2011/110228/KomagataMaruReport02282011logo.pdf>

3. The Public and Public Space

Inherent in the construct “public art” is the notion that there is an entity for whom such art has been created, that is the public. In other words, public art requires a public. Hannah Arendt distinguishes between two separate but related ways of understanding the term public,

[which] signifies two closely interrelated but not altogether identical phenomena:...first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody, and has the widest possible publicity....The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves.... Second, the term ‘public’ signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it....It is related to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together.⁶¹

There are four interrelated meanings for “public” in contemporary discourse, Jostein Gripsrud and the editors of *The Idea of the Public Sphere* contend:

We speak of physical spaces, such as city squares and parks, as being public when they are open to all and part of a shared ‘commons.’ Extending this metaphor, we think of information and cultural resources as public when they are freely accessible and communicable...Second, we distinguish between public and private concerns...[however] deciding on where the line between the public and private domains should be drawn has been a continuing focus of contention in democratic societies...Third, we employ the term public as a social category...as in the phrase ‘reading the public,’ and in a more general sense to characterize the collective of citizens. Fourth, we describe the aggregate of individual views that emerge among a public of citizens...as ‘public

⁶¹ Hannah Arendt, “Excerpt From *The Human Condition* (1958)” in Jostein Gripsrud et al, eds. *The Idea of the Public Sphere* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010): 104-05.

opinion.’ The contestations involved in the formation of public opinions are often called ‘public discourses.’”⁶²

These publics exist within, or create by their aggregation, various forms of engagement which include the idea of the *public sphere*: a conceptual space in which individuals exchange ideas and opinions. A public space may be part of a public sphere, but the physical space is not the public sphere: the former may be an actual physical site such as a civic plaza, sidewalk, “public-private” space built by a developer to fulfill guidelines for building setbacks, or a park where informed dialogue may occur; while the latter arises from coffee house culture of the 18th and 19th centuries to our twenty-first century virtual sites of communication: the public sphere is an overarching *conceptual framework* for public, political communication.

Jürgen Habermas developed the notion of the *public sphere* in his seminal 1962 work, translated from *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* to *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989.⁶³ Habermas writes that “the public sphere distinguishes itself through a *communication structure* that...refers neither to the *functions* nor to the *contents* of everyday communication but rather to the *social space* generated in communicative action” [Habermas’ emphasis].⁶⁴ The idea of the public comes about in the 18th century, after feudal society “had broken apart into private elements on the one hand, and into public on the other” where, Habermas writes:

the corresponding polarization within princely authority was visibly manifested in the separation of the public budget from the private household expenses of a ruler. The institutions of public authority, along with the bureaucracy and the military, and in part also with the legal institutions, asserted their independence from privatized sphere of the

⁶² Gripsrud et al, “Editors Introduction,” *Public Sphere*, xiv.

⁶³ For Habermas, “*Öffentlichkeit* designates a sphere of open (public) spaces and communication where a public discourse on matters of common concern can take place and lead to the formation of an opinion on part of the public of citizens that in turn may influence political decision making.” In Gripsrud, Editors Introduction, xv.

⁶⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “Excerpt from ‘Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy’” (1992) in Gripsrud, 185.

princely court. Finally, the feudal estates were transformed as well: the nobility became the organs of public authority, parliament and the legal institutions; while those occupied in trades and professions...developed into a sphere of bourgeois society which would stand apart from the state as a genuine area of private autonomy.⁶⁵

From this, public discussion and the dissemination of opinion evolved into an ever-widening sphere of male influence and political power, and with the emancipation and enfranchisement of women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a “public sphere” ideally would encompass anyone allowed a voice, or anyone who participated in the public realm. But even as we engage in electronic communication, Habermas states, we refer to the former physical infrastructure associated with public discourse:

For the public infrastructure of such *assemblies*, performances, presentations, and so on, architectural metaphors of structured spaces recommend themselves: we still speak of forums, stages, arenas, and the like. These public spheres still cling to the concrete locales where an audience is physically gathered. The more they detach themselves from the public’s physical presence and extend to the virtual presence of scattered readers [of all media]...the clearer becomes the abstraction that enters when the spatial structure of simple interactions is expanded into a public sphere.⁶⁶

Public Spaces

John Parkinson defines public spaces as those which are “freely accessible places, where everyone has free right of entry or free right of informational access...” in which “the things that concern, affect, or are for the benefit of everyone...as opposed to things that primarily concern individuals.” Furthermore, he notes that responsibility for such space is a group concern, and are often “paid for out of collective resources...as opposed to things that are individually owned.”⁶⁷ Twenty-first century public spaces are

⁶⁵ Habermas, “The Public Sphere Rediscovered,” in Gripsrud, 116.

⁶⁶ Habermas, 1992, in Gripsrud, 186.

⁶⁷ John Parkinson, “Holistic Democracy and Physical Public Space,” in Mark Kingwell and Patrick Turmel, eds., *Rites of Way* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2009), 72-73.

often immaterial and constantly redefine themselves, but these virtual public spaces are, however, not as public as they appear to be, artist Vito Acconci states: “When I hear the words, when I say the words, I’m forced to have an image of a physical place...I should be thinking of a condition...[in which] the public gathers in two kinds of spaces. The first is a space that *is* public...the second is a space that is *made* public.”⁶⁸

With regard to how I apply the term *public* in this research, art installed or performed in a space which is freely open to the public is public art. I did not film ‘public art’ installed in the airport, library, city hall, hospital or other semi-public spaces due to restrictions on filming, even though it is often included within the broadest definitions of public art. I have included a work, *Digital Natives*, which was displayed on an electronic billboard owned by the Squamish First Nation and operated by Astral Media, a private company—public art, but not as free as its curators would have liked.

Clint Burnham, interviewed in “Responding to Site,” PA 2.3, makes the point that what we perceive to be an online public space is, in reality, privately controlled—Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other sites are only unrestricted insofar as each corporation owning the site allows it to be unrestricted, and unfettered not by any entrenched Charter of Rights, but by an implied or actual legal agreement between each user and the site’s legal owner. So the ‘Tweeted’ and emailed messages he and co-curator Lorna Brown presented on the billboard in 2011, which encouraged a critical engagement with, and critique of, the relationship between the hegemonic culture and that of the First Nations people upon whose land the billboard stands, had to be vetted by Astral Media prior to their display.⁶⁹

Public spaces in Vancouver are spread over the city, rather than in one central piazza-like area. The nearest we come to that is Robson Square, and even that is compromised.

⁶⁸ Vito Acconci, “Public Space in a Private Time,” *Critical Inquiry* 16 no.4 (Summer 1990): 901.

⁶⁹ Refer to Lorna Brown interview, PA 2.3



Figure 1. *Occupy Vancouver*: public art or public action? 11-11-2011 (Photo courtesy The Globe and Mail)

Anchored by the Arthur Erickson-designed Supreme Court of British Columbia to the south and by the Vancouver Art Gallery to the north, the “square” is a terraced series of small open spaces and waterfalls bifurcated by Robson Street, and another plaza north of the building interrupted by a fountain. The older building has historic implications as an *arena* for political, legal, social protest, because it formerly housed the Supreme Court of British Columbia (1906-1980). The former main entrance to the courthouse is now the rear of the VAG, a proscenium stage upon which protestors gather. The duality of the Vancouver Art Gallery building politicizes art installed on or near its exterior: for instance, from 23 January to 2 May 2010 artist Michael Lin had the entire Georgia Street façade, between the columns, covered with a hand-painted mural of a floral pattern, while below protestors railed against the extravagant cost of the Winter Olympics. The previous winter Marianne Nicolson installed lighting which turned the columns into glowing white totem poles at night (4 October 2008 to 11 January 2009),⁷⁰ on this building that had been the locus of several Supreme Court decisions regarding

⁷⁰ Vancouver Art Gallery, http://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/the_exhibitions/past_exhibitions.html

aboriginal land claims. The “Occupy Wall Street” movement, which spread from New York to other cities in 2011, including Vancouver, where the idea originated with the magazine *Adbusters*, saw a tent city occupy the Georgia Street courtyard of the Art Gallery until shortly after the November civic election. I asked Jenifer Pappararo, curator of the Contemporary Art Gallery, if she thought it would have been received differently if the Occupy movement was a *performative* public art event. She reminded me that art events have been staged as agitprop, *political art*, functioning as protest within an aesthetic context.⁷¹

The museum “exposes frictions between the public and the private,” Krause-Knight states, where competing directives, to conserve and to educate, may be interpreted by some as an “intellectual fortress.” Countering this perception, galleries and museums are moving into the community with outreach programs and satellite sites. In Vancouver the Contemporary Art Gallery, a small non-profit gallery downtown, created a digitized art tour of its neighbourhood, which one could access via a smartphone application.⁷² An agreement between Westbank, the developers of the Shangri-la Hotel and Residences, Vancouver’s tallest building, and the VAG, resulted in the VAG’s Offsite, a permanent space next to the tower on which the gallery curates twice-yearly installations. One of these is depicted in the documentary PA 2.2: Ken Lum’s *From Shangri-la to Shangri-la* (2010), an installation of three, ¾ scale models of squatters shacks once located on the tidal flats along the North Vancouver shore.⁷³

Art in Public Spaces

While Habermas does not address art per se, civic-situated art, that is to say art placed in nominally public spaces, invokes or invites a dialogic relationship between it and the public: all art has the potential to speak to us, but public art speaks to all of us,

⁷¹ Jennifer Pappararo interview, 27 January 2012.

⁷² Contemporary Art Gallery, <http://offsite.contemporaryartgallery.ca/>

⁷³ See VAG Offsite, http://vanartgallery.bc.ca/the_exhibitions/public_art.html

to those who engage and those who otherwise do not engage with art: whether we choose to listen is another thing. Ruth Beer, an artist and Associate Professor of Visual Art at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, posed this question as we were having lunch with another artist: “For example, if somebody has a private building and they have a private patio that faces...the street and they put a sculpture [in it], is it in the public? ...If it’s on private space, but I go by it every day on my way to work, does that make it public?”⁷⁴ There are places in Vancouver that are nominally public spaces but which are, in fact, not only on privately-controlled land but which have restricted access, in which there is so-called “public art.” There is, for example, a totem pole designed by Bill Reid, carved by other artists, tucked away in a courtyard at 940 Seymour Street; or at King Edward Village, there are several bronze animals arranged in unusual pairings, mostly hidden in the courtyard of this private development. While these works fulfill the developer’s public art mandate, their publicness is questionable.

In each encounter with a public art installation or ephemeral event, there is an implied or explicit invitation to react to it in some way, or to participate in it, if only by its imposition into a nominally open or free space through which we traverse. Not all public art is confrontational, but because it has been painted, constructed, installed, performed, projected or transmitted into a civic or corporate space visible to passers-by, it is now part of our experience of that space: whether we are aware of it, appreciate it, criticize it, or engage in some dialogue with it is up to us.

For instance, Liz Magor’s *LightShed* (2004), situated on a small outcrop of the pedestrian seawall in Coal Harbour, is obviously not a functioning work shed because it is a scale model of one, elevated, with no apparent way to access the doors, which are ajar. Filming it I noticed most people pass by on foot or bicycle paying little attention to it in the daytime, but when I shot it at night there was some curiosity, which may have had to do with intermittent illumination within the work which makes it appear as if someone were inside moving about.

⁷⁴ Ruth Beer, in conversation with author, 15 July 2010

Or one could take several minutes to observe what happens around Beth Alber's *Marker of Change* (1997), situated in Thornton Park near Pacific Central Station, an impoverished area of the city of marginalized publics known as the Downtown Eastside. Alber's sculpture is a series of fourteen pink granite coffin-like benches arranged in a one hundred foot diameter circle, a memorial to the 1989 massacre of fourteen women at L'école polytechnique in Montréal. Each coffin is inscribed with the names of victims of violence against women, while nearby a panel offers more information.⁷⁵ The site is usually occupied by a transient population eating lunch, having a smoke, sharing a joint. Some of those sitting on the stones may wonder, as I initially did, why there was a water-collecting gouged scar in the middle of each coffin-size bench, making the "bench" less inviting: one would not want to sit there if the scar is full of water. Adrienne Burk notes, "Water both renews life and collects reflections. Scars, however, will never disappear."⁷⁶ They are also receptacles for tears, as the Parks Board's Jill Weaving [sic] pointed out to me when I interviewed her. Connected by its site to the history of violence within the area, the site itself *with the monument* has been altered from a lawn to a contemplative memorial space, even as it remains a place of transition: to and from the train station; from somewhere else to here; from having something to having nothing; from invisibility to visibility; from non-meaning to meaning; from existence to non-existence; from forgetting to memory. Then again, for another public, a bench is sometimes just a bench; for the public I've seen occupying the work, the art's message is not rejected so much as it is ignored.

⁷⁵ The city's Public Art Registry describes it thus: "The benches are about the length and width of a woman's body and the depression in the center of each bench catches rain water, a reference to tears. A 98' diameter circle outside the benches is set w/ 500 7½" square tiles with the names of donors." http://app.vancouver.ca/PublicArt_net

⁷⁶ Adrienne L. Burk, *Speaking for a Long Time. Public Space and Social Memory in Vancouver*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 35.

Summary

A city's public spaces are often public in name only, in the control of or associated with a private development.⁷⁷ Public space is *agreed-upon space*: it is only public if so designated or appropriated. Acconci points out that those spaces designated public are "a reminder, a warning, that the rest of the city isn't public";⁷⁸ a point reiterated in a discussion I had with curator Barbara Cole: the parks, she pointed out, belong to the city and are run by the Board of Parks and Recreation, plazas to the buildings they front, sidewalks to the engineering department, and waterfront to the federal government.⁷⁹ "Setting up a public space," Acconci continues, "means setting *aside* [his emphasis] a public space."

Is the Vancouver Art Gallery public when its admission pricing is exclusionary? "In this city," curator and SFU Gallery director Bill Jeffries told me, "we have MOA [the Museum of Anthropology], the VAG, we have the Vancouver Museum, the Maritime Museum, and probably one or two other places that I can't think of, that are charging for people to get in. Well, they have become 'de-publiced.' ...a place like the Vancouver Art Gallery—charging twenty-one dollars [admission]—it's not as public as it might be, as opposed to the major museums in a place like England, which you can simply walk in to."⁸⁰ He contrasts the fee-charging museums with galleries operated by private art dealers, all of whom one can "walk into for free and receive the same public education benefit that people would get by going to a library." From these concepts that make up public and public space, we can now work toward some definitions of what public art is, and look at ways of categorizing the wide variety of practices within the field.

⁷⁷ A series of articles in *The Guardian* points out how corporations now control and limit access to significant urban spaces: "Privatising the outdoors: who owns our public space," *The Guardian* (11-12 June 2012), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/series/privatising-the-outdoors-who-owns-our-public-space>.

⁷⁸ Vito Acconci, 901.

⁷⁹ Barbara Cole interview, 24 November 2011.

⁸⁰ Bill Jeffries interview, 24 October 2010.

4. What is Public Art?

A working definition of what constitutes public art might be “works commissioned for sites of open public access,” as Miles puts it⁸¹; but it is, asserts Selwood, “notoriously ill-defined,” and citing Apgar, she says “it may be ‘produced for, and owned by, the community,’ whether the community actively participates in its creation, or remains passive.”⁸² Because it can include art in semi-restricted public areas such as airports, hospitals, universities, libraries, and government buildings, “it might be more accurately located in an ideological public realm, rather than the physical spaces of the ‘public sphere.’”

As I addressed this question in filming, interviewing and reading, I questioned my own assumptions about public art. Is the B.C. Binning mosaic *B.C. Beginning* (1958), installed on the back wall of a downtown pharmacy, formerly a bank, public? After all, one can see it from the sidewalk. How public is collection of First Nations sculptures in YVR airport, when half of it is on the secure side of the terminal? After realizing how many permutations of art and performance may be termed “public art,” arriving at any definition demands some qualifiers, as Cartiere makes clear. “Public art is art outside of museums and galleries,” she writes, where it must meet at least one of the following conditions:

1. in a place accessible or visible to the public: *in public*
2. concerned with or affecting the community or individuals: *public interest*

⁸¹ Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 5

⁸² Selwood, *Benefits of Public Art*: 6, citing Apgar, “Redrawing the Boundaries of Public Art,” *Sculpture*, May-June 1992.

3. maintained for or used by the community or individuals: *public place*
4. paid for by the public: *publicly funded*.⁸³

Such a wide field does not lend itself to a single visual representation, other than a montage of art, which I have inserted in PA 3 over my interview with Bryan Newson. Rather than trying to look at multiple works of Vancouver's public art to arrive at an answer to the question, I wanted to examine one work in some detail. At Newson's suggestion I contacted Barbara Cole of the non-profit artist's co-operative Other Sights for Artists' Projects,⁸⁴ who was curating three successive projects to be installed along the south shore of False Creek near the former Olympic Village. The new Southeast False Creek neighbourhood, Cole writes in the website describing the project, was planned

as a "model sustainable development" – one that promoted green building practices, environmental responsibility, and alternative transportation choices. Consistent with this imperative, *When the Hosts Come Home* invited three artist teams whose practices incorporate the use of recycled and refurbished materials, to create temporary, site specific sculptural works that address the meaning of "legacy"... Their work uses informal methods to make visible the transformation of begged, borrowed, donated, salvaged, and found materials into publicly used objects and spaces.⁸⁵

The first of the three projects had already been dismantled by the time I began filming, but the second one, by German artists Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser, was just underway in early summer 2010. It proved to be an ideal introduction to the making of art for a public space.

⁸³ Cartiere and Willis, *Practice*, 15.

⁸⁴ Other Sights is an artists collective which "seeks to create a presence for art in spaces and sites that are accessible to a broad public...outside of the gallery context...[by providing] new and unexpected exhibition platforms" <http://www.othersights.ca/about/>

⁸⁵ Other Sights for Artists' Projects, <http://www.othersights.ca/when-the-hosts-come-home/>

Köbberling and Kaltwasser build nothing to last

Cole invited Köbberling and Kaltwasser, who often use recycled materials in their art, to come up with a project using “some residue from the Olympic Games” on the site of an abandoned city works yard next to the former Olympic Village. “The understanding with the city,” Cole told me, was that she had “permission to use the land until [the city decides] to use it.” She thinks there is “something intriguing about working on interim land,” within sight of downtown Vancouver.⁸⁶ The athletes participating in Vancouver’s 2010 Olympic Winter Games were housed in units in a new condominium complex, which would be sold upon the completion of the Games. To protect the appliances from the temporary tenants, the developers sheathed them in Wheatboard, a composite, biodegradable material. Several thousand sheets of Wheatboard were removed from the complex after the closing ceremonies and disbursed to different parties; Other Sights was able to obtain approximately two thousand of the 4-foot by 8-foot panels for the artists’ sculpture. “So first there was the material and then there was the idea,” Kaltwasser tells me during a lunch break. “We were very long thinking which kind of symbol or icon would be worthy...as an object that is decomposable.”

Köbberling picks up the story: “We are here in a vast land which will get developed one day, and how do you develop a land: normally you take a bulldozer or a destruction machine and just make tabula rasa.... And so our idea was to use a symbol of this destruction engine...which will morphize into earth later with the help of the community” which would, at the opening, be invited to implant seeds into the structure.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Barbara Cole interviews conducted between May 2010 and January 2012, PA 1.

⁸⁷ Martin Kaltwasser and Folke Köbberling interview, 3 August 2010, PA 1.



Figure 2. Filming Köbberling and Kaltwasser's *The Games Are Open* (Photo courtesy Barbara Cole)

I had initially thought of this examination of their work, both in the documentary episode and my written analysis, with a focus on the artists working to reveal an understanding of public art as a *process* as much as an *outcome*. As I watched them work and interacted with them I also developed a sense of public art as the expression of the artists' identities and their "meaning-making." In the case of *The Games Are Open* this meaning-making revolved around death and decay, which was expressed in the form—a bulldozer which erases—and in its purpose—to decompose.

Although his father, an architect, died when Kaltwasser was thirteen, he did as his father had planned and followed the same career, but soon found himself chafing in an office environment, where he remained until the year his former girlfriend and two of his friends died within months of one another. He partnered with Folke Köbberling, an artist, quit architecture and together they began creating sculptures and ephemeral events, often utilizing found material. His experience of death is apparent in his and his partner's choice to build a work in which its decay is its purpose. In a commissioned text for the project Holly Ward notes that although the sculpture "appears to be permanent, dominating and perhaps even obtuse...this colossal model performs a dialectical dance

between notions of legacy and the forces of entropy, operating in turn as both monument and anti-monument.”⁸⁸

The scale emphasized the power of the developers in changing the city’s landscape, but the work’s decay serves as a warning that all of this is temporary, that sooner or later all of our monumental works will be undone by nature. Filming its construction in the public eye, where people daily interrogated the artists about their work, and where the artists had to contend with the very elemental forces they wanted to eventually act on the sculpture, I had one obvious definition of public art: that it consists of a work of art presented to the public outside a gallery or museum, although I am well aware there is public art in airports, hospitals, libraries and so on. It is equally obvious, but has some interesting reverberations with regard to the artists’ interaction with a city bureaucracy, that such art is the result of the artist’s passion, which can run up against engineering, safety, and other regulations.

Categorizing Public Art

Cartiere’s “Further-expanded Field”

One of the challenges in answering this question of “What is public art” is the multiplicity of practices that make up the field. The range of public art requires taxonomy, and one such model, based on the art’s attributes, was undertaken initially by Rosalind Krauss⁸⁹ and expanded by Cameron Cartiere into a “Further-expanded Field.”⁹⁰ Referring to Cartiere’s diagram below, the potential variations in the types of public art become apparent. In Krauss’s original field, there are eight categories: site–construction; axiomatic structures; sculpture; and marked sites, which interrelate to four binary categories: landscape and not–landscape, architecture and not–architecture.

⁸⁸ Holly Ward, “The Transcendental Monument,” commissioned text for Other Sights For Artists’ Projects, <http://www.othersights.ca/publications/holly-ward-on-kobberling-kaltwasser-pdf>.

⁸⁹ Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October* Vol.8 (Spring 1979), 30-44.

⁹⁰ Cartiere and Willis, *Practice*, 11-13.

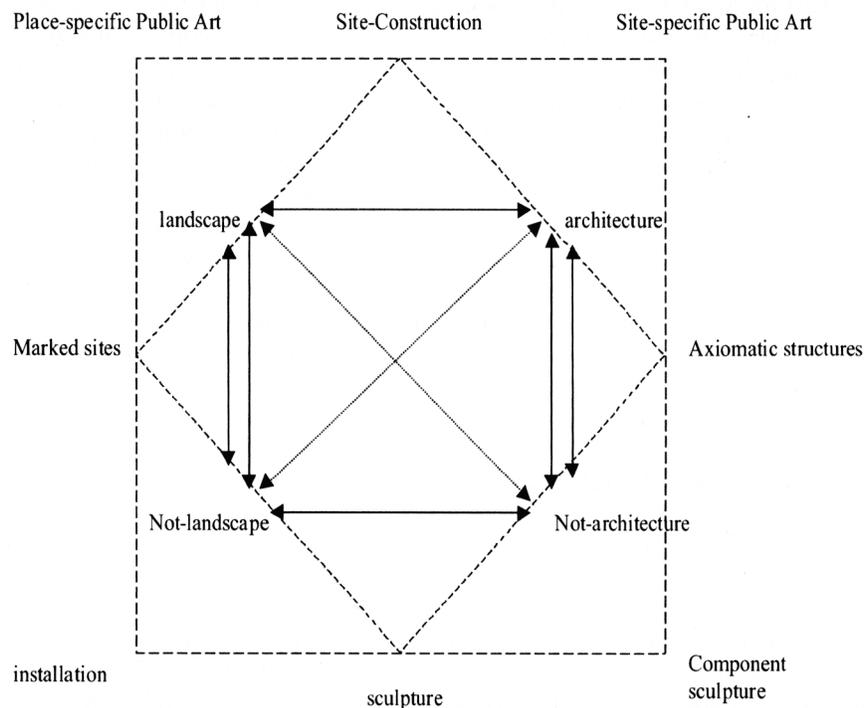


Figure 3. *The Further-expanded Field* (Reprinted from Cartiere, 2008: 13)

But in the intervening years, “the evolution of installation and public art has moved beyond the expanded-field model,” Cartiere writes⁹¹, necessitating an expansion with four additional categories: place-specific public art; site-specific public art; installation; and component sculpture. These twelve then appear to hold much of what we identify as *physical* public art. But “as with Krauss’s original model,” Cartiere cautions, “the *further expanded field* only extends to a limited specific degree” which corresponds to her investigation, and so the model “does not include such genres as digital and cyber arts...”; also, because it is a structuralist model, “it does not readily incorporate place-specific works which are about process or performance and are not based in site-

⁹¹ Cartiere, “Cold,” in *Practice*, 12.

constructions. Such a model,” she continues, “would need to be multidimensional” if it were to include all the potential variants that make up the field of public art today.⁹²

There are many levels to Köbberling and Kaltwasser’s *The Games Are Open*: it is a conversation about the changes in the neighbourhood, it reflects Martin’s thoughts about death, it reinvents itself, from sculpture to plant nursery, it contrasts its decaying form with the pristine towers next to it, the material it is built of references the Olympic Village’s first occupants, our throw-away culture, and our preoccupation with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances. No matter how I try to pin one of the Krauss/Cartiere labels to it, no sooner do I identify it as one type than I see it as another: is it a site–construction? Given that it references its location in a former city works yard, is it a marked–site? However, if I follow the Cartiere grid, as she states: “public works created for and from specific locations... incorporating ‘site–constructions’ and ‘marked sites,’ are classified in this expanded model as ‘place–specific public art.’”⁹³ Place-specific appears to contain all the possibilities in this particular work.

Cartiere’s model is a well-developed framework for understanding some kinds of public art as a physical process and its result: the sculpture, mural, installation, etc.; it also works to describe the artwork’s relationship to its location and the meaning of that location. It makes sense to me in the abstract, but the lens that I look through, both literally through the camera and figuratively through my subjective analysis, brings me to a different way of understanding public art: as an aesthetic component of one’s relationship to the city. How does the art respond, if at all, to my presence? How do I respond to it? This was in part what I was trying to discover as I shot the documentary. How can I understand what public art is through understanding what is it saying to me? How might I understand further what its relationship to its site is, through an understanding my response to the work? Given that works may be amalgams of two or more categories, in trying to understand public art it still seemed relevant and useful to try to understand different themes in the types of public art I was encountering. The

⁹² Cartiere, *Re/Placing*, 47.

⁹³ Cartiere, “Cold,” in *Practice*, 13.

Krauss/Cartiere matrix was one way of thinking about public art. Was there another model I could use?

If, for instance, the artists' purpose with *The Games Are Open* is to stimulate a conversation about what Liz Magor calls "our hasty place," a city where "things were put together very quickly...its material history deteriorates really quickly and we lose it,"⁹⁴ then I might respond to this work as a political or environmental comment. The art, by itself, can only be what it appears to be, unless the artist or curator makes its meaning explicit. If an explanatory panel is added, with curatorial rationale, as it is with this work, I then either reappraise it based on the curator's statement, or confirm my hunches about its purpose. I don't require the explanation, but without it an artist's intent may be ascribed in any number of ways, which may be as equally valid as the curatorial statement. But the impetus for its creation began with an idea about something, or a commissioned rationale for its creation: as Cole writes in her statement for "When the Hosts Come Home," the over-arching project containing the Köbberling and Kaltwasser work, "central to this project is the making public the acts of foraging, compiling, creating, experimenting, building and exhibiting. Finding new purposes for surplus material has at its heart, an impulse to be thrifty, a trait that carries extra significance when enacted on the site of the Olympic Village."⁹⁵ And so it is fair, I think, to ascribe that meaning onto the completed work, even if it offers additional layers for the artist and/or the beholder.

This thinking led to my consideration and proposing of a tentative, alternate set of typologies with which to categorize public art that focus on its *relational* qualities. Recognizing that any given piece of art might evoke multiple relationships depending on the piece, the artist and the artist's intent, and what the viewer brings to the work, I none the less came up with five categories that distinguish some primary relational qualities of public art. The categories are: site-responsive; dialogic-expository; temporal-ephemeral; didactic-political; and commemorative-historic. They are based on my

⁹⁴ Liz Magor interview 4 January 2011, PA 2.1

⁹⁵ Barbara Cole, curator's statement, <http://www.othersights.ca/when-the-hosts-come-home/>

limited investigative experience with public art, and I recognize that to develop a well-rounded and evidence-informed theory would take more research. Also, to be clear, these are not proposed as a replacement for any other set of categories, rather they are another way of relating to the art.

Site–Responsive

A site–responsive work is one that communicates something about its site, whether that is as a response to the site’s history, or to cultural references and uses, or in response to the topography of the site. It is there because it has to be there and only there, otherwise it would have no meaning beyond its external appearance. Without wanting to conflate or contradict the two distinct Cartiere categories of site and place–specific public art, this category attempts to situate a particular type of work that is an artistic response to a site in all its ever-proliferating forms. Ken Lum’s *Monument for East Vancouver*, known informally as the “East Van cross,” which I discuss in some detail in the chapter following, is a response to its site, where it declares the east side of Vancouver. It also elicits a response *from* its site, which was, up until the installation of his work, a nondescript industrial intersection, but has now, in Bryan Newson’s words, become “a shrine”⁹⁶ for certain people, evidenced by graffiti sprayed on the retaining wall below the cross. Its relational quality is one of call and response, particularly at night when the cross is illuminated from within. And I would certainly place the Köbberling and Kaltwasser work in this category.

Dialogic–expository

Dialogic–expository works have a specific goal: they have a narrative, in words, pictures, or articulations of sculptural elements which ask the viewer to “read” the work. At the north end of Kitsilano Beach there is an engraved boulder with a lyric prose narrative, *Vancouver in the Rain*, by Regan D’Anbrade (2000), one of the *Millenium Story Stone* series. Another example of dialogic–expository sculpture is the *Hastings Mill*

⁹⁶ Bryan Newson, interview 21 July 2010, PA 3.

Monument (1966) at 401 East Waterfront Road in Vancouver, a Gerhard Class granite sculpture in three segments, each of which has carved into it line drawings and narratives commemorating the mill, Vancouver's oldest building, that once stood on the site.⁹⁷

Not all of this type of work need have text incorporated into the work to tell a story: I filmed Greg Snider's *Project for a Works Yard* (2004), a "mostly to-scale section of a street, including both the utilities, normally buried, and above-ground street furniture"⁹⁸ at the city's works yard, where Snider told me the workers were proud to have evidence of their work revealed, on what is often hidden infrastructure.⁹⁹ Not only does its form define *what* it is—a work of public art—it also defines its site, and its placement here may well indicate a more prosaic, political function as a way for the city to honour its workers, for few others than they come to this yard.

Temporal–ephemeral

Temporal–ephemeral public art could also be site–responsive, as in Andy Goldsworthy's constructions of leaves, twigs and rocks, but it could also be an installation or performance. I filmed the sand drawings of Jim Denevan at Spanish Banks.¹⁰⁰ Here, along the wide beach exposed at low tide, Denevan etched a large drawing of intersecting lines one day with a rake, and another of adjacent circles of varying circumference the following day using a found stick. As with the filmed records

⁹⁷ The information for the Millenium Stone and the Hastings Mill Monument was drawn from Steil and Stalker, *Angels*, 161, 101. The building exists today as a museum at the north end of Alma Street in Hastings Mill Park. <http://www.hastings-mill-museum.ca/>

⁹⁸ John Steil, *Public Art in Vancouver*, 109. (Steil has misspelled Snider's first name in his text.)

⁹⁹ Greg Snider, interview, 11 August 2010.

¹⁰⁰ See Michael Cox, "Jim Denevan Sand Drawing, Vancouver BC," 23 and 24 June, 2010. <http://vimeo.com/30921469>.

of Andy Goldsworthy's work in nature¹⁰¹ Denevan's art lasted only a few hours before each incoming tide washed his "canvas" clean.

I also filmed an afternoon of "dough portraits" by Danish artist Søren Dahlgaard, who invited people at English Bay beach to place a large lump of dough on their head, covering their face, and then he'd shoot their portrait, obliterating the face from the portrait, forcing us to look to other clues for identity and personality.¹⁰² Time figures prominently in these works, a marker of the art's stability or the performance's duration. Works in this category aren't meant to last; the record of their existence is their legacy. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, temporary work such as this may overcome some of the challenges facing public art, artists, and the public art program in Vancouver.

Didactic-political

The difference between this and dialogic-expository is that the former may not be a narrative-based work, but it makes an overt statement of political or polemic intent, such as an electronic installation curated by Lorna Brown and Clint Burnham, *Digital Natives*, discussed in more detail in the following chapter. I suggest the functional characteristic of this type of art is agenda-driven, where the art serves a cause. Such art need not be heavy-handed in its message: Beth Alber's *Marker of Change*, described earlier (p.30), while certainly making a strong statement, presents itself as a contemplative enclosure of stone benches. It is only when reading the explanatory panel and the women's names engraved into each stone "casket" that one realizes the power the work contains.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Riedelsheimer, dir. *Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working With Time* (Warner Home Video, 2003)

¹⁰² See Søren Dahlgaard website, <http://sorendahlgaard.com/?portfolio=dough-portraits>. Both the Denevan and Dahlgaard installations will be presented in a future episode of the series.

Commemorative–historic

Commemorative–historic public art is perhaps the most common, including grave markers, headstones and statues, as well as contemporary iterations of these. Two of these appear briefly in the montages in PA 3: in front of the former Canadian Pacific Railroad Station, now called Waterfront Centre, *Angel of Victory* (1921), commemorates the company's employees who served in the First World War; in the forest near the Tea House restaurant in Stanley Park a carved boulder (1922) honours poet Pauline Johnson. Obviously one can imagine crossovers between this and the previous category, where a work simultaneously marks an historic site or person and makes a political statement: another filmed work, Alber's *Marker of Change* would fit both types.

The counter-argument to a *functional* examination of public art is that it is perhaps an obtuse approach, given that in many cases the intent of the artist may not be known, particularly if the work does not include an artist's statement or curatorial rationale/explanation. We can in those cases only go on our educated supposition, or by the interpretation(s) of others. But the art is there: its very presence in public is its first function.

Summary

I asked Daina Augaitis, the Chief Curator and Associate Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, what the difference was in our experience of public art as opposed to art in her gallery:

When art is situated in the public realm, it isn't contextualized the way it is within the gallery. The gallery is a much safer place ultimately for artists to position their works. There is a way of behaving in a gallery and different codes that come attached to that viewing experience. On the street, in the field, or a room, or if it's a hole in the ground, or even if it's a performance

piece...it's unexpected usually. You don't immediately interpret it as being art.¹⁰³

There is no easy, one-size-fits-all definition of public art. As noted above, Cartiere identifies four qualities, any one of which qualifies an art work as public art: in a place or visible to the public; concerned with or affecting the community or individuals; maintained for or used by the community or individuals; paid for by the public.¹⁰⁴ That said, public art is such a wide-ranging field, encompassing performative as well as ephemeral and temporary works, infrastructure, signage, and architecture, to name but a few variations, that it continually resists attempts to contain it. After defining it, the work can be further identified by its physical characteristics, as exemplified by the Krauss/Cartiere field, or by its relational or functional characteristics, or by some other taxonomy. Because the art I filmed had an explicit or implicit relationship to its location, whether understood through historical, cultural, topographical, aesthetic, practical, political or commercial/corporate lenses, I put forth the argument in the next chapter that most if not all public art responds to its site in some way.

¹⁰³ Daina Augaitis, interview 19 August 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Cartiere, "Coming in From the Cold," in Cartiere and Willis, *Practice*, 15. In this essay, 32-33.

5. Place, site, and art.

In discussing public art, the first impulse of someone encountering the work for the first time may be to look at the work as art divorced from its site, but because it *is* situated somewhere, it can also be critically examined in the context of its location, wherever it is—in the gallery or on the street.

Public art doesn't necessarily have to be a response to the cultural or historic values of a site, which Cartiere labels "place-specific" work, nor does it necessarily have to address the site's topography, "site-specific" work,¹⁰⁵ but the art has been placed *somewhere*, for *some reason*. How, for instance, has our perception of Michelangelo's *David* changed as a result of it being moved from a public plaza in Florence to its own atrium in the Uffizi Gallery—when the original intent was to place it "high atop a buttress of the Florence Cathedral" in the 1501 commission?¹⁰⁶ The corollary to this is a site's "response" back onto the work: *David* is now indoors, lit by a skylight and isolated upon its plinth but close enough to touch, almost frightening in its size and power, has become a sculpture in a museum, which I suggest is a different response than what a cathedral would have applied to it. In this instance, the site—the Uffizi Gallery—influences our perception of the art and thus may have altered its meaning. Art also changes a site: if nothing else, the site now becomes known for the art it contains. The modern gallery, Miwon Kwon maintains, has a hidden agenda,

perceived not solely in terms of basic dimensions and proportion but as an institutional disguise, a normative exhibition convention serving an ideological function. The seemingly benign architectural features...were deemed to be coded mechanisms that *actively* disassociate the space of

¹⁰⁵ See Cartiere, *Re/placing*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History. Second Edition* (New York: Abrams, 2002), 695.

art from the outer world, furthering the institution's idealist imperative of rendering itself and its values "objective," "disinterested," and "true."¹⁰⁷

The art in a museum or gallery can become hermetically isolated from any context other than as a collected work: we may consider a Haida mask displayed in a glass case "art," decontextualized from its cultural function as a tool in mythologic story-telling. However, it must be acknowledged there are Haida masks identical to the ones used for ceremonial purposes which are created by Haida artists *as art*, for sale or display in galleries, and that contemporary First Nations artists adapt traditional designs for their art. Brian Jungen's use of Nike athletic footwear to create simulacrum of Haida masks and designs is one example.¹⁰⁸ Opposing the white-walled isolation of art in the museum or gallery is art that is in direct conversation with, and makes direct reference to, a particular location, a *place*.

Place

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan calls *place* "a center of meaning constructed by experience"¹⁰⁹ which include olfactory, sensory, visual, and auditory clues. As with the former examination of the construct, "public," it is necessary to examine what is meant by the concept, "place." For Gaston Bachelard, place is "an embodiment of dreams," where we confront a "unity of image and memory" to "maintain the poetry of the past."¹¹⁰ Inherent in the concept of place is identity, a socially constructed experience of a physical space shaped by the psychological, political, social and cultural experiences,

¹⁰⁷ Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Boston: MIT Press, 2004), 13.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, "Brian Jungen Gallery," *The Tyee* 25 January 2006, <http://thetyee.ca/gallery/2006/01/25/BrianJungen/>

¹⁰⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place: an Experiential Perspective," *Geographical Review* 65, no.2 (April 1975): 152.

¹¹⁰ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press: 1964), 15-16.

activities, and history associated with that site. Place, Michel de Certeau asserts, implies an “emotional interpretation and attachment, socially produced and experienced.”¹¹¹

Our understanding or comprehension of space is based on the relationship between objects and our own bodies, where we define something as up or down, near or far, small or large, in relation to human scale and position. This is not merely a physical perception and, as Cartiere notes, “it is essential to comprehend that the body’s relationship to place exists on several levels including the physical...the cerebral, incorporating the analytical and conceptual relationships to space, as well as individual perception and perspective in relationship to other objects.”¹¹² The challenge to develop a definition of place is that the idea of place is intimately linked to our individual relationship to it. “What is the focal point of place within public art practice?” Cartiere asks.

A public artist working within a place-specific model can, at best, only put forth their own version of that place; a version that inherently is a unique interpretation of the place given the individualised reference to place that, according to Bachelard, each of us carry within us. Rather than a (seemingly unattainable) common definition of place, perhaps it is a common framework of relationships to place that can draw artist and audience into a familiar arena of understanding a specific place...

One cannot just regard the topography of the site and the physicality of the work. One must explore the sociality of the space.¹¹³

Responding to Site

The second episode “Responding to Site,” PA 2, presents five works, each of which has something to say in response to its location. In the first segment, Liz Magor’s *LightShed* (2004) references a type of freight shed once common on the waterfront; the

¹¹¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 29.

¹¹² Cartiere, *Re/Placing*, 37.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 40.

second segment features three of Ken Lum's works: *Four Boats Stranded*, *Red and Yellow*, *Black and White* (2001) commemorates four epochal moments in the province's history and their connection to the former courthouse they adorn; *Monument for East Vancouver* (2010) is a multi-valenced work announcing the east side of the city to the west; *From Shangri-la to Shangri-la* (3 January to 6 September 2010) operated as a response to two locations, its site and the site its scale-model cabins referenced historically; in the third segment Lorna Brown and Clint Burnham's electronic installation *Digital Natives* (4 to 30 April 2011) engages a corporately-controlled billboard in the service of indigenous issues related to the land it stands on.



Figure 4. Liz Magor's *LightShed* (video frame, M.Cox)

PA 2.1 *LightShed* (2004)

Liz Magor's work clearly references the sociality and historical significance of its site and makes a direct reference to it, even though she told me, "I don't think of *LightShed* as an item on a guided tour about the history of Vancouver. It's more that I used the material...[and] industrial history...to suggest to me some forms and some conditions that I used in the sculpture."¹¹⁴ But for anyone unfamiliar with her rationale,

¹¹⁴ Liz Magor interview. 4 January 2011, PA 2.1.

including me prior to our interview, it is a scaled-down freight shed on pilings, painted silver. While a work can carry meaning beyond its appearance, without explanatory text—and this work has none—we may only see it for what it resembles.

Before the late-20th century conversion of downtown Vancouver's Coal Harbour, situated between Stanley Park and the north end of Granville Street, from rail yards and docks to marinas for pleasure craft, and long before that, before the city was called Vancouver, when it was a village along the waterfront known as Granville in the mid-1800's, the waterfront was lined with freight sheds on pilings, into which were stored ropes, sails, nets, and goods awaiting a boat, or goods transferred from a boat. These wooden sheds have all but disappeared in its western end, replaced by luxury yachts, floatplane terminals, cruise ships, the convention centre and residential condominium towers. One of the developers, Grosvenor, wanted a significant public art project to commemorate their 50th year; the location they chose was on the seawall fronting a new complex they had built. Whereas I interpret *LightShed* as an historical representation, Magor prefers to think of her work as one which wants to keep up to date: coated in the most popular car colour of 2004, which happened to be silver, in fifty years if "the citizens are driving bright red cars...it would be appropriate to take *LightShed* apart and recoat it so it will always look current..."¹¹⁵ so that it is simultaneously of a time and of our present time. The location chosen for this work is now marked not only as the site of an important public art work, but it now becomes an historical referent to its past as a sculpture from 2004.

PA 2.2a Four Boats Stranded, Red and Yellow, Black and White (2001)

In 2000 the Vancouver Art Gallery invited Ken Lum to create a work commemorating the millennium. "They said, we want you to make a work that, in the public context, expresses something of the millennium...an assessment of our locality,"

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

he says in his interview.¹¹⁶ “I took my cue from having visited a lot of cities...old cities, and you see terracotta statuary up high, or even...[the corporate] neon or Plexiglas logos on top of fifty-storey buildings.” In *Four Boats Stranded, Red and Yellow, Black and White* “each boat correspond[s] to an epochal change...in terms of contact [and] arrival,” Lum continues. At each corner of the gallery roof he’s mounted a boat: on the north side of the gallery roof are a red First Nations canoe and the three-masted survey ship “Discovery,” which Captain George Vancouver sailed into what became English Bay in 1792; on the south side, two freighters, one representing the “Komagata Maru,” which had been rebuffed in its attempt to bring East Indian migrants to the city in 1914; the other representing one of four from Fujian province in China which brought illegal 599 migrants to the Vancouver Island coastline in 1999.¹¹⁷ I asked Lum about his choice of colours:

The colours came about because when you come up with a work you always have to find the right forum for the content, that’s what makes it hard. You can actually have an idea...and you know what to say...but the hard part about making art is finding the proper forum. I started thinking about how to colour-code it. I started thinking racially....So the Red Cedar [canoe] was red anyway, and then Captain Vancouver was white...and the Fujian refugee ship was a rusting hulk, this bright orangey colour...so I thought, yeah, it’s yellow—that made sense. And then of course [the ship] *Komagatu Maru* was black, in fact, but South Asians in most parts of the world...are considered black.¹¹⁸

Whereas *Four Boats Stranded, Red and Yellow, Black and White* is clearly a direct response to the place it has been mounted, Lum’s *Monument for East Vancouver* presented me with a challenge when I attempted to categorize it.

¹¹⁶ Ken Lum interview 3 August 2010, PA 2.2.

¹¹⁷ Joshua Greenberg examines the news coverage of this story and its implications in “Opinion Discourse and Canadian Newspapers: the Case of the Chinese “Boat People,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* vol.25 no.4 (2000).

¹¹⁸ Ken Lum interview, PA 2.2.

PA 2.2b Monument for East Vancouver (2010)

A work which responds to its site but which was not built for that site, Ken Lum's *Monument for East Vancouver* stands 17.37 meters (57 feet) high on the corner of a 6th and Clark, a T-intersection on a prominent ridge. It is in the form of a Christian cross which may be "linked to the Catholic inscription of East Vancouver culture" in the early and mid-twentieth century, "home as it was to many Italians, Greeks and Eastern Europeans," Lum's artist statement reads:

Over the years, the symbol has been adopted as an emblem for East Vancouver as a whole but its appearance has generally been tentative rather than overt. The lack of overtness is, I feel, symptomatic of the underlying meanings that the symbol expresses. These meanings have to do with problems of injustice, inequality, subjugation and the trauma of poverty and acculturation, particularly as it relates to immigrant life... The sculpture faces westward towards downtown, towards the centre. It is an expression of hope and defiance.¹¹⁹

Even though *Monument* makes cultural and historical references, and so could be interpreted as place-specific, it was not built specifically for the location where it was installed. Lum thought of several sites where a large cross might work, but "once you start looking for a site that is not predetermined, then you start entering into jurisdictional conflicts. What is private? What is public? Is there electricity? Is there engineering?"¹²⁰ A park fronting a residential area on a hill was ideal, he thought, but a "cursory survey" of the neighbours revealed they valued their view of the mountains.

¹¹⁹ Ken Lum, artist's statement, Vancouver Public Art Registry website. <http://app.vancouver.ca/PublicArt_Net/>.

¹²⁰ Ken Lum interview, PA 2.2.



Figure 5. Ken Lum's *Monument for East Vancouver* (video frame, M.Cox)

“Trial and error” led to 6th and Clark, a busy intersection in a nondescript area of warehouses, rail lines, and a continuous flow of port truck traffic which is east, by a kilometer, of the east-west division of the city at Ontario Street. Not only was there city land available to set the work back from the sidewalk, there was access to power nearby. Mounted in a cylindrical concrete plinth, the words “East” and “Van” in white acrylic are backlit by LED illumination from sunset to sunrise, their size making them readable from the Skytrain rapid transit line below, while the illuminated cross itself is visible from several vantage points to the west and north.

Lum says the work signifies “trauma and suffering,”¹²¹ countering a different interpretation which I shared with Bryan Newson, that “it defines something about the pride that east side Vancouverites feel.”¹²² Perhaps Lum’s negative view derives from his early encounters with the gangs that were associated with the East Van cross,

¹²¹ When I emailed him this section of the paper, Lum replied: “I know this notion of pride is mentioned by a lot of writers and reviewers but I really disagree. Pride of what I ask? Pride is also a deadly sin. I think many commentators would like to frame it in terms of pride because to do so would deflect from what the cross is really about--trauma and suffering. Pride to me suggests cheerleading.” Ken Lum email to author 26 February 2012.

¹²² Bryan Newson interview, PA 2.2

Vancouver Sun journalist Douglas Todd suggested, who also grew up in East Vancouver.¹²³ Todd and Lum would have seen it scratched into desktops, spray-painted on walls, stitched onto jackets, often accompanied by “rules” as in “East Van Rules.” Bill Jeffries, curator of the Simon Fraser Art Gallery, contends that Lum “was growing up in this rough East Side neighbourhood where he got pounded on a lot when he was a kid,” and that much of his art, not only *Monument for East Vancouver*, responds to this background. And in a sociological sense, this glowing beacon “stakes out a piece of territory,” Jeffries says, “to tell all those people [the gangs] that they’re finished, they’re toast, they’re out of here.”¹²⁴ Unlike a lot of public art in the city, which Jeffries finds “pleasurable to look at, but...very difficult to know whether an artist’s mind was behind it,” Lum’s work I would argue is unambiguous, announcing itself as art and socio-political statement.

Monument for East Vancouver also makes itself known as a religious statement of some kind, referencing as it does the Christian cross. The question may be then, is this message intentionally sacrilegious? Todd, a religion and ethics columnist for the *Vancouver Sun*, was surprised that “Christians haven’t criticized it more” and suggested that the work’s acceptance “shows something about their level of tolerance.”¹²⁵

The long process to find and secure a site was worth it, Lum said, explaining that “the work is so contingent on its site, that it actually changes the content of the work—so that if that work was on Main Street near Broadway [one of the sites considered], it would have a very different resonance than where it is now.” Lum sees the monument as

¹²³ Douglas Todd interview 29 July 2010, PA 2.2.

¹²⁴ Bill Jeffries interview 24 October 2010, PA 2.2.

¹²⁵ Douglas Todd, PA 2.2. Census data shows that Canadian born Christians in Vancouver (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Other) make up 55% of the city’s population, and of immigrants before 1986, 54%, while of immigrants between 1996 and 2001, only 34% were Christian. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Recent Immigrants in...Vancouver.”

“poignant” and “forlorn” in an “industrial wasteland...among a morass of different signifiers,” where the work points its face toward “the city of capital, of money.”¹²⁶

Without knowing its provenance, we might label *Monument* a place-specific work, but as Lum says, the work has not only changed the site but the site has changed the work. Referencing the location, but not being built for the location, referencing the culture and history of eastside Vancouver, *Monument for East Vancouver* is perhaps best defined in terms of the set of categories in Cartiere’s “Further-expanded Field” as an *installation* which occupies and references the socio-historical narrative of the east side of the city.

Lum described his understanding of the relation of the art to its location, asking:

is it not possible that a work becomes more site specific or less site specific OR more place specific or less place specific depending on the final site? For instance, the final site on 6th and Clark is much more imbued with social and political signifiers than a site we tried near the Broadway Skytrain station...I was unaware that the tiny sliver of ground on which the cross presently sits belonged to the city so never considered it until I found out otherwise. Obviously, if it was sited near the Broadway Skytrain, it would be less visible to the city i.e., you would have to go there to see it, so it becomes in a certain sense more site specific but in another sense less site specific. More, in the sense that you have to go there and by going there and seeing it there at the Skytrain area, all kinds of highly localized signifiers become activated. Less, in the sense that its very localization means less resonance to East Vancouver as a whole or East Vancouver as a whole *in the context of all of Vancouver*.¹²⁷

As I shot *Monument for East Vancouver* from different angles, from moving cars and rapid transit, from a park at sunset and the Terminal Avenue viaduct at night, I became aware of its significance for me as a geographical reference point, operating

¹²⁶ Ken Lum, PA 2.2.

¹²⁷ Ken Lum, email to author 6 June 2012. My emphasis added.

both consciously and subconsciously as a node on my mental map of the city, a beacon, signalling I was headed home.¹²⁸

PA 2.2c From Shangri-la to Shangri-la (2010)

The third work by Ken Lum is a comment on the rapidity of change Vancouver has seen, not only physically in its architecture, but psychologically, too, in terms of what he calls our island mentality. “Islanders being people who are separated from the rest of the world...I think that really defined the city for a long time...I thought it would be an interesting idea to diachronically position [a work] in terms of what the city is already.”¹²⁹ This installation was a two-thirds scale recreation of three squatter’s shacks once located on the Maplewood Mudflats in North Vancouver, homes to writer Malcolm Lowry, Greenpeace founder Paul Spong, and artist Tom Burrows. *From Shangri-la to Shangri-la* was up during most of 2010 at the Vancouver Art Gallery’s Offsite, a permanent space next to the Shangri-la Hotel and Residences, on which the gallery curates twice-yearly installations. We were cautioned in the curatorial text next to the work not to assume this as simply a rich vs. poor statement, but as the *Georgia Straight*’s art critic Robin Laurence wrote, not making this interpretation is difficult

in a city recently identified as having the highest housing-price-to-household-income ratio in the world?¹³⁰ Lum’s work looks a lot like a metaphor for the gap between the marginalized lives of Vancouver’s homeless and the staggering privilege represented by Living Shangri-La. Still, it is more complex and layered than that: some of the mud-flat squatters lived there by choice, including Lowry, who was a remittance man.¹³¹

Standing in contrast to the pristine tower, tallest in the city, the scale reproductions of cabins built of found lumber and logs (in the originals), installed at a

¹²⁸ Curiously it doesn’t appear on Google Earth or Maps: 49° 15’ 55.48” N, 123° 04’ 39.46” W (accessed 12 June 2012).

¹²⁹ Lum interview 3 August 2010.

¹³⁰ *8th Annual Demographic International Housing Affordability Survey: 2012*. PDF.

¹³¹ Robin Laurence, “Ken Lum’s from shangri-la to shangri-la and Michael Lin’s A Modest Veil,” *The Georgia Straight*, 4 February 2010.

time of great civic extravagance—the Olympics—worked in *opposition* to its site. All three of Lum’s works presented in PA2.2 had multiple responses to the location of their installation but I would argue that only *Four Boats Stranded* could be termed place-specific, in the Cartiere/Krauss definition, as it is the only work which was both made specifically for the site and references the history and cultural significance of the site.

PA 2.3 *Digital Natives*

The fifth work, presented in PA2.3, posed another challenge to categorization. In my interview¹³² with the curators, Vancouver poet, critic and SFU academic Clint Burnham describes how he was jogging across the Burrard Street Bridge in 2009 and thought that the newly installed electronic billboard at the south end might be used for a non-commercial purpose. “I was already using social media, Twitter and Facebook, in my classes,” he says, and it occurred to him that the sign, which could stream images and text, would make an interesting installation. The billboard is owned by the Squamish First Nation, which leases it to Astral Media, based in Toronto, which places video advertisements in ten-second rotation on the board. It is situated on a small parcel of aboriginal land, on what once had been the ancient village “known in the Musqueam language...as sən’a?q^w and in [the Squamish language] as Sen’ákw,”¹³³ land which, Susan Roy states in the catalogue for the installation, is

a site of controversy—reflecting a history of colonialism, dispossession, and assertions of Aboriginal territory from a number of First Nations...with a rich Indigenous history that historical narratives emphasizing the development of the City of Vancouver have minimized and, at times, erased.¹³⁴

¹³² Clint Burnham and Lorna Brown, interviewed together, 6 January 2012.

¹³³ Susan Roy, “A History of the Site: the Kitsilano Indian Reserve,” in Clint Burnham, Lorna Brown eds., *Digital Natives* (Other Sights for Artists’ Projects and City of Vancouver Public Art Program: 2012), 87.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Burnham teamed up with curator and artist Lorna Brown and approached Barbara Cole at Other Sights for Artists' Projects, and the Squamish Nation, which had erected the billboard in defiance of local objections and city ordinances against billboards: because this wedge of land underneath the Burrard Bridge is aboriginal title, it falls under federal jurisdiction, not civic. Burnham and Brown would go through a protracted series of meetings with the three First Nations who had occupied this land, and with Astral Media, to create a month-long exhibit of short messages posted by artists and non-artists through Twitter and email.



Figure 6. *Digital Natives*, curated by C. Burnham and L. Brown (video frame courtesy Mark Curry)

The title “originates with communications theorist Marc Prensky...[writing about] internet familiarity [among youth] whom he called ‘digital natives’,” Burnham writes.¹³⁵ As planned, the majority of messages posted to the sign were by or about indigenous people, culture and history. The project nearly fell through when Astral Media got cold feet and cancelled it preemptorily on the Friday before its official opening, Brown says in

¹³⁵ Clint Burnham, “The Digital Neighbour,” in *Digital Natives*, 37.

her interview, but by writing curatorial responses for each message, the curators addressed the company's concerns, insofar as liability for their content.

"Moving from federal to feudal @ the speed of capitalism? Time to redefine the responsibilities of corporations," was one of the Tweets posted to the board. The messages were, as Burnham admits, an "in your face" signifier of rage, frustration, pain, resentment, but they also represented native people's activist integration into mainstream culture through their use of social media. The presentation was also visually confrontational: by using the same sans-serif font on either a red or white background—the red corresponding to messages written at the invitation of the curators and the white to those which were received through social media—the project's interjections appeared in stark contrast to the advertisements.

Barbara Cole contracted a local videographer, Mark Curry, to record the sign over a single, wintery day during its run in April 2011. The messages occur for ten seconds every minute, as an intervention in the advertising. I cut excerpts from Curry's lengthy recording into my documentary, and reinstated the two messages which had been rejected by Astral Media, one by Edgar Heap of Birds, the other by Larissa Lai onto the sign in editing. Musqueam hip-hop artist "Miss Christie Lee" allowed me to use her song "Experience," which I thought appropriate given that this was, at one time, Musqueam land on which the sign stood. Only after I met the singer did I understand how deeply connected she was to the site, as one of the descendants of the first chief of the village which stood where the Burrard Bridge now stands. Singing in the Musqueam language Hən'q'əmin'əm', "Experience" is a series of thank-you's to her ancestors, repeating the phrase "there are no words that can express how much you mean to me."¹³⁶ This fortuitous/synchronous choice of singer and song to location added a level of meaning to the work for me, and I used it at both the beginning and end of the episode to honour her and her ancestors.

¹³⁶ Christie Lee Charles (a.k.a. "Miss Christie") (un-recorded) interview, 5 April 2012.

A billboard, an otherwise “empty” lot, a bridge: individually and collectively they signify commerce, the urban experience, the commute from *one place* to *another place*. But underneath this, literally, was once a village, and as one participant’s tweet said: “If you lived under this bridge / you’d be home by now / #gentrification.”¹³⁷ The artist’s concern, as one of the volunteers working on another project told me, is to be “worthy of the site,”¹³⁸ and this work speaks eloquently to the history, politics, and current state of relations between indigenous and immigrant or the descendants of immigrant peoples. I would characterize it as “didactic–political” in my relational taxonomy; in the Krauss/Cartiere matrix, I suggest it is an electronic “site–construction,” employing both place and site–specific elements.¹³⁹

Site

An artwork that depends on a particular place for meaning suffers if circumstances cause it be divorced from its intended location. Ron Terada’s *The Words Don’t Fit the Picture* (2010) is an eponymous illuminated sign installed on the Robson Street plaza of the Vancouver Public Library’s central branch. As Terada confirmed in an email, his intent was to have the work hang on the library’s exterior wall like a marquee advertisement, referencing not only the marquees once prominent in Vancouver but also the popularity of the library’s plaza; however, after the library’s architect Moshe Safdie, voiced his objections to Terada’s addition to *his* work, the sign

¹³⁷ Clint Burnham, *Digital Natives*, PA2.3

¹³⁸ Desmond Wong interview, August 2010, PA 1.

¹³⁹ *Digital Natives*. (Vancouver: Other Sights for Artist’s Projects and City of Vancouver Public Art Program, 2012). Essays by Barbara Cole, Clint Burnham, Lorna Brown, Candice Hopkins, Susan Roy.

was mounted on steel posts anchored in unadorned concrete blocks, set several meters from the library. Now alienated from its context, the irony of its comment is doubly so.¹⁴⁰

If a place is known by its cultural, historical, or personal connections, a site is known by or for a specific topography, for its geography. Sometimes it is both, depending on how it is being referenced: Lumberman's Arch in Stanley Park describes a particular place, once the site of a First Nations village, and it describes the log arch itself, and it is a sloping field overlooking the North Shore on which people picnic. We might call art which references the topography using the term "site-sensitive, in which the particular location is taken into consideration," notes Cher Krause Knight, a term which "eventually led to *site-specific*...in which the interaction between site and art is a prime determinant in the work's conception, design, and execution, with the art sometimes altering the site." As this practice became more common from the 1960's on with what became known as land or earth art, as seen in the work of Robert Smithson, Richard Long, and more recently, Maya Lin, it was apparent that one could identify some work as requiring a certain locale for topographical considerations, rather than historical or cultural: Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) in Great Salt Lake,¹⁴¹ Long's *Connemara Sculpture* in Ireland, a placement of stones reminiscent of Celtic patterns (1971),¹⁴² and Maya Lins' undulating *Eleven Minute Line* at the Wanås Foundation, Wanås, Sweden (2004), which she describes as "somewhere between a line and a walk."¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ron Terada, email to the author, 16 Nov. 2011: "Indeed, my original intention was to affix a sign work upon the facade of the library, but Moshe Safdie, the architect of our lovely library, would not allow it. Safdie wouldn't even allow the I-beams to go directly into the ground for fear of disturbing the integrity of the brick tiles, hence the use of concrete blocks to support the work....Given the short timeline and budget (Winter Games), I still realized this was perhaps my one and only chance to ever fabricate anything at this scale, hence my "compromising" on the installation."

¹⁴¹ Robert Smithson, http://www.robertsmithson.com/earthworks/spiral_jetty.htm

¹⁴² Richard Long, <http://www.richardlong.org/Sculptures/2011sculptures/connemara.html>

¹⁴³ Maya Lin Studio, <http://www.mayalin.com/>. Look for "Art" then navigate across the site to 2004, clicking on the picture will eventually lead to a description of the work. It should be noted that she does, in this work, reference historical sources, but not of the site of the art; rather, she links a prehistoric work in Ohio with prehistoric European cultures.

“Throughout the 1990’s, as installation and environmental works continued to increase in notoriety, frequency, and complexity, the term *site-specific* in relation to such works fully entered the lexicon,” Cartiere writes, clarifying the definition as installation which “often refers to works that respond to the topography of a site.”¹⁴⁴ When it is outdoors, the work, subject to weathering and human interference, is a human interruption or interference in the land. As I wrote in a paper on the intersection of art and nature in the work of Aganetha Dyck and Andy Goldsworthy, “no matter how an artist working in and with the natural world may claim to honour it, he or she imposes an artifice which nature then unmindfully acts upon.”¹⁴⁵ A site-specific work requires a certain site for its content or for practical purposes, but unlike a place-specific work, it doesn’t necessarily make a reference to any historic or cultural implications of its site.

Summary

The five works presented in “Responding to Site,” PA 2, represent some different approaches to art which is engaged in a dialogue with its location. Understanding that *place* has anthropocentric meaning, and that *site* refers to geophysical or topographical meaning, allows us to differentiate the responses artists have to various locations, to historical events, to political positions, and to our reading of the work. In addition to its physical qualities expressed in the Krauss/Cartiere matrix, another way to look at public art is by its relational qualities, or how it interacts with and is acted upon by its location, and by its function(s), those intended and those unintended.

¹⁴⁴ *Digital Natives*, 44

¹⁴⁵ Michael Cox, “Hive and Cairn: Communicating with Nature Through Artistic Intervention.” Paper presented at the annual Graduate Liberal Studies Symposium, Stanford CA, June 2009.

6. Vancouver's Public Art Program: Process, Implementation and Challenges.

Process: Civic Art

A government-run public art program, or even one run by a corporation, foundation or an organization within the city such as a library,¹⁴⁶ first must catalogue the art which existed prior to the adoption of the program, and then work out a method of operation which will ensure transparency in its selection of work—which is usually an arms-length committee; a funding model; an means of working with the various civic services such as engineering and planning; a de-accession plan, and other bureaucratic necessities. Vancouver's public art program, as noted in Chapter 2, began with its adoption by city council in 1990. The city has a civic public art program and a private sector program. The civic budget for public art is a line item in the annual budget, currently around \$2 million. Artists submit proposals in response to a call for submissions; the Public Art Committee, consisting of nine members appointed by the City Council to two-year terms (renewable once), then begin the process of winnowing the submissions.

The members consist of:

- Two artists of recognized standing in the art community;

¹⁴⁶ Pavco, the B.C. Crown Corporation which operates BC Place Stadium and the Convention Centre, has its own "public" art program; the Vancouver Public Library has an art program funded initially by a half-million dollar budget built into its 1995 construction cost, and then by an endowment fund supporting ongoing art works.

- Three other art professionals (artists, designers, gallery directors, curators, historians, educators, conservators, etc.) who have a thorough knowledge of public art;
- Two urban designers (architects, landscape architects, designers..);
- One developer recognized by the community;
- And one member of the community.¹⁴⁷

Process: Private Sector Public Art

When public art is installed to complement the exterior of a building by its developer/owner, it becomes a “value-added benefit” for the builder and those inhabiting the building, whether leasing or purchasing suites. For instance, a Dale Chihuly sculpture of blown glass “flowers” inside a showcase window at 1200 West Georgia Street, visible to passer-by, raises the profile of the developer and by association the development’s tenants, even if architecturally the building is not dissimilar to the towers surrounding it.

“Vancouver is almost unique...in that we don’t impose either on ourselves or the private sector a percentage of building cost as a way of funding [public art],” Newson said.¹⁴⁸ Instead, Vancouver’s “private–public” art process is triggered by a proposal for redevelopment, which applies to “private sector re-zonings greater than 100,000 sq.ft....[which] contribute \$1.81 (2009 rate) per buildable (FSR) foot”¹⁴⁹ toward art which is visible to the public (i.e. it isn’t inside a lobby). Developers may choose from three options:

Option A – the preferred Option. Requires full participation in a juried public art process and review by the Public Art Committee.

Option B - 100% of the required art budget is paid to the City for allocation through the Public Art Program.

¹⁴⁷ City of Vancouver website, “Civic Agencies and Committees: Public Art Committee,” <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/civicagencies/civicindex.htm>.

¹⁴⁸ Newson interview 13 October 2010.

¹⁴⁹ Cultural Services, Vancouver, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/cultural/publicart/private.htm>.

Option C - a 60/40 percent split whereby the developer spends 60% of the required budget developing artwork for the development lands, and pays at least 40% of the budget to the Public Art Reserve.¹⁵⁰

With a private–public implementation of art on a commercial development, once the developer has chosen how their contribution is to be allocated from the three options listed above, a public art consultant is hired, who will either call for submissions or will work with the developer to choose a shortlist of artists who are invited to tender proposals.

The private sector program requires developers to engage a public art consultant in the early stages of the project’s development. This concept is often referred to as “percent for art,” wherein a city apportions a small percentage (generally one percent) of its capital construction budget to public art. For example New York’s public art program, since its inception in 1983, has seen “more than 228 projects...completed with accumulated art work commissions of over \$256 million.”¹⁵¹ This civic capital development model is used in Seattle and Calgary,¹⁵² whereas Vancouver doesn’t engage in much of its own construction. Thus the line item in the annual budget, and thus the unusual funding model for the private sector program.

Implementation: Civic Art

After assigning a project manager from within the public art office or from outside, terms of reference are drawn up which include logistical considerations. This is published as a prospectus on the public art listserv, asking for letters of expression of interest and evidence of what the artist has done previously. The submissions are reviewed by an art committee, which is a majority-art-expert panel independent of the City, who assess and recommend the short-listed artists. The city then provides the two

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ NYC Culture, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/html/panyc/panyc.shtml>.

¹⁵² Seattle’s Public Art Program, <http://www.seattle.gov/arts/publicart/>, and City of Calgary Corporate Public Art Policy CSPA028, amended 13 July 2009, pdf.

or three shortlisted artists with some funding to make a more detailed plan, which will then go before the committee again, who will make the final choice. The city then works with the artist to create a detailed design proposal for the site, which must satisfy safety, engineering and other concerns. The artist is then commissioned to create the work.¹⁵³ This sounds fairly straightforward but the processes, Willis contends,

are shackled by time constraints and systems that inhibit both the artist and the commissioning agency. Worse, these processes are often unfaithful to the public they serve. From artist selection to design development, to fabrication and installation of the artwork, committees are unequipped to deal with their enormous responsibilities, and project managers don't have the autonomy and authority to do their job. Competitions are unwieldy, and unrealistic expectations are placed on the project's applicants and selected artists.¹⁵⁴

In 2011 the city commissioned Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, a well-known Haida artist who invented "Haida Manga" graphic novels, to design a sculpture which also acts as a railing along a retaining wall behind a baseball diamond in Kensington Park at Knight and 33rd Avenue. A 43-metre long steel sculpture which "is a playful adaptation of contemporary Haida design,"¹⁵⁵ it depicts Orca whales pursuing salmon and was inspired, the artist wrote in his statement, "by the exceptionally abundant 2010 Fraser River salmon return, a marked contrast to the ominous trend in declining wild salmon stocks."¹⁵⁶ His work is part of the overall *Clark-Knight Corridor Public Art Plan*, written by consultant Karen Henry, which "aspires to make the street also a place to be present, to pay attention, enjoy and consider,"¹⁵⁷ which is a challenge because this is the main north-south arterial trucking route to and from the inner harbour. The only art I recorded

¹⁵³ Paraphrased from Newson interview 13 October 2010 and emails between Newson and author, 13 June 2012.

¹⁵⁴ Shelly Willis, "Investigating the Public Art Commissioning System," in Cartiere and Willis, 153-154.

¹⁵⁵ City of Vancouver Public Art Program press release, 30 November 2011.

¹⁵⁶ Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, *ibid.* See also City of Vancouver Public Art Program, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/cultural/publicart/postersbrochures/AbundanceFenced.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Karen Henry, *Clark-Knight Corridor Art Plan*, July 2011. PDF download, <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/cultural/publicart/civic/clarkknight/pdf/CKPublicArtPlan.pdf>

on what Henry calls this “aggressive working traffic corridor”¹⁵⁸ is the Ken Lum *Monument for East Vancouver*, as the Yahgulanaas work was installed after shooting was terminated. It will be a challenge for any artist to respond to, either by reflection or amelioration, the harshness of this street’s constant truck, bus and commuter traffic.

Implementation: Private-Sector Public Art

Ian Gillespie, president of Westbank Projects, told me that he doesn’t think of the percentage requirement as a tax, but rather “as a cost of doing business....If the City of Vancouver didn’t have the program, I’d be doing it anyway.” As a developer, he looks at the entire project as an opportunity to be creative, from the financing to the leasing or sale of units in the building, and art is “very particular to the building...I find that a lot of the [public] art that people do is very timid,...but when I’m building a million square foot project in a five-hundred foot building, to me it would be a waste to put some little pieces that someone has to stumble upon and find...I want to make a big move.” For the Fairmont Pacific Rim he and the architects wanted to use the exterior as a “really big canvas.” The selection of Liam Gillick was unanimous: “it was really obvious that Liam’s piece was the right thing for that building.”¹⁵⁹ Westbank is also the developer of the Shangri-la Hotel and Residences, and negotiated the deal with the Vancouver Art Gallery to use much of the setback for their Offsite location. And Gillespie is now proceeding with the largest public art commitment by a private developer to date in Vancouver: the Telus Garden project, a redevelopment of the company’s downtown office block by Westbank and Henriquez Partners architects. The art consultant is Reid Shier, a former curator of the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver, the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto and currently the director/curator of Presentation House Gallery in North Vancouver.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*: 8

¹⁵⁹ Ian Gillespie interview 26 August 2010 (all quotes same date).

His art budget, \$1.7 million (2012), is broken down thus:

- 1,440,922 Artist fees and costs associated with fabrication and installation.
- 150,000 Contingency for specialty consultants, travel, studio visits, etc.
- 34,305 Administration fee
- 5,700 Project preparation
- 41,900 Project development
- 26,400 Artist selection and contracting process
- 12,200 Project management
- 3,850 Final report and project documentation¹⁶⁰

The spaces for most of the art in the art plan are not at ground level, rather the consultant will be looking for innovative electronic or sculptural elements for canopies, ceilings, and walls. It remains to be seen who will be selected, and what will be created, for this major project to be completed in 2016.

Challenges

Here, I identify six challenges to art in public spaces in Vancouver: the setting; public conservatism; maintenance; weather; the restrictive nature of the city's land base; and permanent versus temporary installations.

Natural Surroundings

Situated at 49.11°, Vancouver winters can be dreary, with less than 100 hours of sunlight each month¹⁶¹, but although a southern orientation, with more light, might be viewed as more desirable, in fact much of the most desirable real estate in Vancouver faces north, toward the harbour and mountains. In effect, Vancouver is “an amphitheatre surrounding a public space of water,” writes Lance Berelowitz in *Dream City, Vancouver*

¹⁶⁰ Reid Shier, *Telus Garden, Vancouver: Detailed Art Plan*, June 2012.

¹⁶¹ The Weather Network, “Vancouver Int'l, BC, Canada.”

and the Global Imagination, where the open spaces are a bay, the harbour and, at the city's south, the Fraser River estuary, creating what Lance Berelowitz has termed a "centrifugal city," with its emphasis outward.¹⁶² The major parks are on the periphery: Stanley Park is a peninsula connected to the city by a narrow isthmus; Pacific Spirit is a forest outside the western boundary of the city; the beaches and 22 kilometres of continuous seawall pedestrian path surrounds Stanley Park, following the shoreline along English Bay and along the north and south shores of the False Creek inlet. This preoccupation with sea and mountains has been codified over the past thirty years by the city's "view corridors," which are various locations throughout the city that planners determined were to remain open to views of the North Shore mountains, although the attempt to preserve these visual cones by limiting the height of buildings downtown has had the unfortunate result of a buzz-cut of similarly-truncated towers, and a view-blocking wall of green glass condominium towers along the north shore of False Creek,¹⁶³ which Douglas Coupland calls "see-throughs."¹⁶⁴

Anyone planning to install art in a public space in Vancouver—the city, a developer, or a non-profit group—must contend with the potential of a site to be someone's vantage point, a point reiterated by several of my interview subjects: Bryan Newson, Scott Watson, Bill Jeffries, jil weaving [sic], Malcolm Bromley, Andrew Pask all mentioned the potential for conflict between the existing view and a site for public art. It is perhaps the greatest challenge to the Vancouver Sculpture Biennale, insofar as many of the eighteen-month installations are placed in the city's parks and beaches. The Biennale's director, Barrie Mowatt, told me that great care was taken to situate

¹⁶² Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2010), 162-63; Berelowitz calls Vancouver "edge city," where the "cult of the view" is the primary reason for the profusion of narrow high-rises in the downtown peninsula.

¹⁶³ The city was recently forced to review its height control review after a detailed presentation by CityHallWatch, a citizens group, showed that city planners had neglected to take into consideration the topography of the downtown peninsula. Report by Stephen Bohus, 13 December 2010, <http://cityhallwatch.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/review-vancouver-height-controls-report-s-bohus-13-dec-2010-provisional.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Douglas Coupland, *City of Glass* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2009), 124.

sculptures where they did not impinge unduly on existing views.¹⁶⁵ For instance, Jaume Plensa's *We*, a head and upper torso built of different alphabets in an open lattice, was set back on a hilltop overlooking Sunset Beach, across Beach Avenue from two apartment towers, without provoking complaints. To the extent that views can be accommodated by strategic positioning and by consultation with those affected, the Biennale has, in its more recent exhibition, addressed some of the concerns which provoked the removal of Oppenheim's *Device to Root Out Evil* from Coal Harbour in 2008 which was, in some ways, a small-scale reprise of the controversy over the much-cited removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* in New York.¹⁶⁶



Figure 7. Dennis Oppenheim's *Device to Root Out Evil* (maquette; video frame, M.Cox)

Controversial Art in a Conservative City

Dennis Oppenheim's *Device to Root Out Evil* (1997) is a scaled-down, upside-down skeletal church of steel pipe, clear and red Venetian glass and lights. After being

¹⁶⁵ Barrie Mowatt interviews 20 October 2010 and 17 May 2011.

¹⁶⁶ On the *Tilted Arc* decision and subsequent debate see: Deutsche, 1988; Horowitz, 1996; Knight, 2008; Levine, 2002; Serra, 1991; Senie, 1989b; and Wetenhall, 2009.

rejected by Stanford, and New York before that,¹⁶⁷ the work was accepted for the 2005-2007 Vancouver Sculpture Biennale, which at that time was associated with the private Buschlen-Mowatt Gallery. The Biennale placed the work in a pocket park between two residential towers overlooking Coal Harbour. Although the art was never intended to be a criticism of the church, Oppenheim contends in a public talk he gave in Vancouver,¹⁶⁸ a small number of evangelical Christians took exception to *Device*'s depiction of a church, while another group, composed of the condominium owners whose suites overlooked the art, complained that it interrupted their views of the harbour. There was a difference of opinion between the Biennale and the Parks Board about when the work would be de-installed and the Board, reacting to the complaints, removed *Device*, even though there were at least as many people who enjoyed it where it was. The art was not site or place-specific: in this small park, it figured prominently against the harbour and mountains and quite possibly it may have aroused less ire had it been installed elsewhere in the city. The Benefic Foundation purchased the work as an investment, and shipped it to Calgary, first to the Glenbow Museum, later to be installed in the courtyard of an artists' live-work complex in the Ramsay neighbourhood.¹⁶⁹ The rejection of Oppenheim's *Device* points accusingly to what Jenifer Pappararo of the Contemporary Art Gallery told me is an essentially conservative city.¹⁷⁰

I've already mentioned Tamar Frank's LED installation on two residential towers in the West End, which she had to reprogram to turn off a few hours after sunset, where her original intent was to have the lights on all night (see page 21). Another controversial work, which took a decade to see realized, the *AIDS Memorial* located at Sunset Beach

¹⁶⁷ "God and Man at Stanford," *New York Times*, 17 October 2004.

¹⁶⁸ Dennis Oppenheim (lecture, Langara College, Vancouver, 14 April 2010, recorded by the author). See also Michael Cox, "Dennis Oppenheim Isn't Happy," *Coastline Journal*, 16 April 2010, <http://coastlinejournal.org>.

¹⁶⁹ Articles on the controversy include Denise Ryan, "Edgy art will be homeless once more," *Vancouver Sun*, 24 March 2008; Rod Mickleburgh, "Artistic Controversy Reaches Tipping Point," *The Globe and Mail*, Thursday 3 April 2008; Marsha Lederman, "Big Win for Calgary," *Globe and Mail*, 2 June 2008; and N. Tousley, "Controversial artwork could put Calgary on global cultural stage," *The Calgary Herald*, 6 September 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Jenifer Pappararo interview 27 January 2012.

is instructive in how the civic departments and government, a non-profit society, artists (in this case architects) and other stakeholders must find consensus when proposing to install a permanent work in a public space. Beginning with early suggestions and activist-led enthusiasm for a memorial in 1994, it wasn't until 1998, after several locations were selected, assessed and rejected for various reasons, before Sunset Beach was chosen; in 2001 a fundraising drive was initiated by the Vancouver AIDS Memorial Society; the work, a winding ribbon of ten Cor-ten steel panels with the names of over 800 victims cut into the panels, was officially unveiled in 2004.¹⁷¹

Each city draws its particular self-image from its setting, its citizens, and how they create a socio-cultural mash-up of ideas expressed in the arts and architecture. Vancouver's natural setting, which is (a) close at hand, (b) visible from most of the city, (c) highly valued as an enhancement to real estate, and (d) undeniably beautiful, poses a challenge for artists and those who commission art. Placing art in or against this "scenery" is going to disturb someone's vista, if only temporarily. One position is to reject the imposition of any artifice into nature: "I come here to see nature, not to see an impression of nature," a friend said, referring to one of the Biennale works installed in a park. A counter-argument, posed by another friend, is that artistic interventions in natural surroundings can enhance our experience of a site in ways that are amusing or surprising.

Maintenance

All too common in Vancouver are complex mechanical or electronic art works that work partially, if at all. Daniel Laskarin's *Working Landscape* (1998), set in a pocket park at the north end of Hornby Street, consists of four circular platforms, three of which rotate at different rates to coincide with units of the work day: once every twenty minutes, once an hour, and once every eight hours. Each wooden deck has a park bench and a potted tree, but for several years the motors were burnt out, none of the platforms rotated, and I doubt anyone noticed the subtle change from "working" to "not

¹⁷¹ AIDS Memorial Society of Vancouver (2001-2009) <http://www.aidsmemorial.ca/index.html>

working.” It was repaired in 2011 but still has no explanatory panel other than its title and the artist’s name engraved on a small disk atop a post with an emergency “stop” button. Alan Storey’s *Password* (1994) at 1300 Pacific Boulevard is a kinetic piece built into a retaining wall at ground level, consisting of small rotating drums with letters on them, powered by a parkade’s exhaust fans. The idea being the drums form words associated with the history of False Creek as they rotate, but when I filmed them (on two separate occasions) several of the drums were stuck, and those that weren’t appeared to be out of sync so no intelligible word was formed.

Underneath the south end of the Cambie Street Bridge Tania Ruiz Gutiérrez’s *Garde-temps* (2010) is, in the artist’s words, “a vessel for the distorted appearance of the place and the passer-by [that] emits moving pictures oscillating between the abstract and the figurative.”¹⁷² I filmed its installation,¹⁷³ during which the engineer tested it by playing back a recorded hockey game; on several occasions since I have attempted to film it, only to find it either not working at all or only partially successful. One of the problems with this work, besides its electronic complexity, is where it was situated, in an area with few pedestrians. Also, the infrared camera that detects the passage of pedestrians and interpolates their movement into images on the vase-shaped sculpture is located several meters south of the art, and as there is no delay between a person’s passing the camera and the interpolation of their heat signature into images on the vessel, they never see the interpretation of their movement.

Weather

In a city that gets an average 44 inches of rain annually, art must be sufficiently rugged to withstand rot, rust and freezing. At the corner of Denman and West Georgia streets, the wooden parts of Natalie McHaffie’s 1986 sculpture, *Solo*, constructed of stainless steel and cedar “wings,” are often rotten and broken. Didactic panels, those

¹⁷² Tania Ruiz Gutiérrez, http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/oca/publicart/pdf/lg_gardetemps.pdf, and <http://www.gardetemps.info/>.

¹⁷³ Installation was in mid-September 2010. The work is seen briefly in PA 3, at 8 min, 58 seconds from start of episode.

few that exist, are rendered illegible by solar radiation and weather. Tile mosaics in sidewalks are subject to water damage. Fungi grows on anything not moving.

Available Land

Nature offers another, unexpected challenge to public art: the city's geography. Outward growth is restricted in three directions by water—the inner harbour, English Bay, and the Fraser River, which also forms the southern boundary with the City of Richmond, while Boundary Road, adjoining the City of Burnaby, restricts it to the east. What land is not set aside for parks or zoned residential is under intense pressure from competing interests. Artists cannot afford studio space; families cannot afford houses; retailers often cannot afford exorbitant lease rates. This competition for open space impacts any planning for civic public art. It is not that art cannot co-exist on land which has multiple uses: the Michel Goulet work *Echoes* (2010) at Kitsilano Beach, a series of stainless steel chairs with words cut into the seats, is as much amenity as it is art. Sculpture parks are another way that art and site can co-exist with mutual benefit. Alternatively, when art is integrated into a development, such as the LED art of Tamar Frank on two West End residential towers in Vancouver,¹⁷⁴ then land has not been set aside solely for art. Because open space is at a premium in Vancouver, then its use to site large-scale, more or less permanent works of art, is an imposition not only on those who traverse or are exposed to the space now, but to future generations, who may not appreciate or understand today's choices, which reflect contemporary concerns and aesthetics. The case may be made, however, as it was to me by gallery curator Scott Watson, that the physical results of contemporary aesthetics and curatorial decisions are worth preserving, in as much as we have preserved the outdoor art from previous centuries.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ See Tamar Frank, <http://www.lightspace.org/moreinfowestpenderplacet.htm>.

¹⁷⁵ Scott Watson interview, 13 October 2011. This discussion was in relation to the first Terry Fox Memorial, a large post-modern arch erected in 1984, torn down in 2011 to be replaced by a less imposing work on the same site.

Permanent versus Temporary Installations

The city has had the unique opportunity of enjoying dozens of major sculptural works installed on a temporary basis, first associated with and underwritten by Buschlen Mowatt Galleries in their inaugural outdoor exhibit, *Open Spaces*, in 1998, which they repeated in 2000. The first Vancouver Biennale for International Sculpture was launched in 2005–2007, again in 2009–2011. The third Biennale is planned for 2013–2015.¹⁷⁶

None of the sculptures installed temporarily during these exhibitions were made specifically for their sites, which in Vancouver were mostly in parks, in Richmond mostly on city rights of way, but the art was matched with consideration for its impact on each site. Upon completion of each exhibition the art was either sold at auction or returned to its country of origin. By donation of the artist or by funds raised through the sale of art, the Biennale has managed to retain several legacy works which remain on long-term loan to Vancouver: from the 2005–2007 exhibition, works by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Dennis Oppenheim, Sorel Etrog, Bernar Venet and John Clements; from the 2009–2011 exhibition, works by Michel Goulet and Yue Minjun.

As with the ephemeral sand drawings of Jim Denevan (seen briefly in the title sequence of the documentary series) and installations at the VAG's Offsite, temporary public art resolves the issue of what Newson calls our "diminishing stock of public space" while also alleviating concerns about the appropriateness or aesthetic appeal of art: "it is very much easier to site work on a temporary basis," Newson says in his interview, when I asked him about the Biennale, "and to tell people...this is here for six months....People

¹⁷⁶ Because there has been some confusion and misconception about the nature of the Biennale, I quote from their website: "The Vancouver Biennale (Vancouver International Sculpture Biennale/Biennale Internationale de la Sculpture de Vancouver) is a non-profit corporation ...and a registered charity. It is funded primarily through the sale of art after each exhibition by PHILLIPS de Pury & Company's. 100% of the profits from that sale are used to fund the next exhibition, which covers the majority of the operating budget. The Vancouver Biennale does supplement those monies with funding from many other sources, primarily corporate gifts-in-kind, private philanthropy, foundation grants, corporate sponsorship, and support from the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation and the City of Richmond." <http://vancouverbiennale.com/about.html>.

will complain, but they know that it is temporary and they do not dig their heels in. There seems to be a tremendous acceptance of work that is sited temporarily.”¹⁷⁷ It must be remembered, too, that the other types of public art in Vancouver—performances, festivals, parades, open-air screenings, community dinners, have a much lighter footprint on open space. Most of these performative or temporary installation events are not managed or funded through the Public Art Program, but through other departments, such as the city’s Engineering Department VIVA Vancouver, which “transforms road spaces into people places,”¹⁷⁸ as well as by the individual non-profit societies, e.g. Public Dreams, which raise funds to create and operate the events. Projections, illuminations, performances and time-limited installations provide the city with an aesthetically enriched environment while minimizing long-term impact on open spaces.

Summary

Installations of public art, particularly major sculptural works, are in competition with an ever-increasing demand from multiple publics for what remains of open spaces, or of built-upon land for redevelopment, in Vancouver. But there are many creative implementations of public art commissions which seek to integrate art into architecture and infrastructure, allowing it to serve multiple functions and reducing the requirement for land set aside for art. This is slowly beginning to happen in Vancouver within the calls for art for new developments, although there is much more that could be done, particularly with pedestrian rights of way, footbridges, awnings, transit stops, bike lanes and so on.

Another means by which a city can have large public art installations, particularly site-specific work, which do not impinge on neighbourhoods, is by integrating art into parkland. While the Van Dusen Botanical Garden, at 37th and Oak, offers some two

¹⁷⁷ Newson interview, PA 3.

¹⁷⁸ City of Vancouver Engineering, Viva Vancouver.
<http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/streets/vivavancouver/about.htm>

dozen sculptures, mostly legacy works from the 1975 Stone Sculpture Symposium, placed throughout the grounds, its priority is horticulture, not art. Seattle's nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park, curated by the Seattle Art Museum, opened in 2007; Chicago's Millennium Park in 2004, a private-public redevelopment—which, while not specifically an art park, includes several large artworks and “infrastructure art” such as a Frank Gehry-designed footbridge;¹⁷⁹ Toronto has a small Sculpture Garden, a partnership between the city and the Louis L. Odette family whose foundation has funded the exhibitions since its opening in 1981.

Vancouver has only a few areas left for the creation of a new park, and both current and new parks are subject to their own set of competing interests: team sports want more playing fields, dog walkers want off-leash areas, picnickers want somewhere away from the dogs, nature-lovers would appreciate a bird sanctuary, others would simply appreciate some greenery without the intrusion of art. Perhaps the city will consider creating a new park with a curated art component.¹⁸⁰ As it is now, the major outdoor art is found only in certain areas—the downtown peninsula, the north and south shores of False Creek, while other Vancouver neighbourhoods to the east and south usually have more modest work. Nothing wrong with that, but there is an imbalance, and the reason for this is the nature of the city's private-sector program, which is applicable to developments greater than 100,000 square feet of “usable space.” However, now that the city is rezoning certain outlying areas coincident with rapid transit corridors and nodes, the resulting larger residential and retail projects will perforce involve art in their realization.

¹⁷⁹ City of Chicago Millennium Park, <http://explorechicago.org/city/en/millennium/art.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Vancouver has 1,298 hectares of parkland in its inventory as of 2011, including three “public” golf courses, which total 181.48 hectares, or 13.98 percent of parkland restricted to one class of user.

7. Conclusion

People need art, John Willett contends, “not to bolster up their claim to be civilized but because it is an age-old human activity, a continual delight to practise, study or simply sit back and gape at; full of jokes, problems, explosions, sudden breath-taking beauties; something unpredictable that can be set against modern life’s mechanisms and routines.”¹⁸¹

Public Art in the City

During the course of my enquiry into what public art is and how it is expressed and functions in Vancouver, I began to think of many of the works I had filmed and written about as points of contestation. By this I mean that they involve conflicting publics:¹⁸² those who would rather the art wasn’t there and those who appreciate it; those who disagree with the use of their tax dollars for art (often they are mistaken about which work is tax-funded versus privately funded) versus those who think cities have an obligation to enhance public spaces with art; those who stop to look at the art and those who ignore it. I also began to think of public art as a means of social control or influence, in which the art and the artist, the developer and the city planner, create an intervention in a nominally public space.

By “control” or “influence” I mean that the work demands something of the public, even if it is only avoidance—physical, emotional, intellectual. And by “intervention” I don’t necessarily mean there is an intent to aggravate, but that some public art changes

¹⁸¹ John Willett, *Art in a City*, 239.

¹⁸² Jerry Zaslove introduced this term in a conversation in reference to how public art can stimulate and express diverse and conflicting standpoints and viewpoints.

our experience of a site if only through its physical presence, forcing us to refocus our attention and possibly disrupt movement through a space. Civic and private agendas for public art may be to humanize a street or plaza; to animate it; to engender a sense of belonging; to engage a reaction; to distinguish, define or give meaning to a place.



Figure 8. Yue Minjun's *Amaze-ing Laughter* (video frame, M.Cox)

Nicholas Whybrow, citing Richard Sennett, argues, “disorderly, even painful encounters in the city are a necessary part of learning to handle conflict...[where] being forced to engage with otherness beyond our defined boundaries...has a civilizing effect.”¹⁸³ If the public, or more precisely a particular segment of the public, is affronted, insulted, mystified, bemused, or otherwise challenged by an artwork, at least for their initial encounters, this isn’t a bad thing at all.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of public art for me is when I first encounter a work. It is this unpredictability of the urban landscape that attracts me to city life, the

¹⁸³ Nicholas Whybrow, *Art and the City*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011), 59. He cites Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London: Penguin 2002/1996).

constant surprises, the mix of unfamiliar as well as familiar landmarks. This is also true of the ephemeral, performative public art I have witnessed. Jane Jacobs believes that if urban zoning is relaxed enough it will encourage a vibrant and *unpredictable, unplanned* mix of activity at all times of the day and evening, which makes for a more liveable city.¹⁸⁴ Unpredictability is anathema to a friend of mine, an urban planner who believes in grids and zones and regulations; at least Vancouver tries to engage in the “planned spontaneity” of temporary street closures and other events that encourage convivial engagement.¹⁸⁵ Jacobs writes “the sight of people attracts still other people...people’s love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident in cities everywhere.”¹⁸⁶ Public art is one component that makes a city attractive—not, perhaps, a major factor for someone relocating, but I think it’s one reason why so many cities, large and small, have civic public art programs.

“Public art,” Ken Lum told me, is “not something you codify into a dispensable element in terms of what makes a city economically thriving.”¹⁸⁷ However, a recent study by Regina M. Flanagan¹⁸⁸ suggests there may well be a competitive advantage for cities who have a vigorous public art program: Chicago’s Millennium Park, situated upon a 24.5 acre green roof covering a railroad and a parkade, exhibiting large, permanent sculptures by renowned international artists, was termed an “economic dynamo for the central business district,” and is predicted to have generated over \$2 billion in revenue between 2005 and 2015. But it would require a complex study to ascertain if there is a bottom-line benefit for businesses, and a city, deriving from its public art. The display of art in public spaces is more like a marker, an indication of a city’s diversity and creativity.

¹⁸⁴ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books 1961/1992): see chapter 8 on mixed planning and complexity in neighbourhoods.

¹⁸⁵ See Viva Vancouver, Engineering Services, City of Vancouver, <http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/streets/vivavancouver/spaces.htm>

¹⁸⁶ Jane Jacobs, 37.

¹⁸⁷ Ken Lum interview, 3 August 2010.

¹⁸⁸ Regina M. Flanagan, “The Millenium Park Effect. A Tale of Two Cities,” in Cartiere and Willis, 133-151.

Three Questions

I began this project with these questions:

- What is public art?
- What is the relationship of public art to its site?
- What is the process by which a city acquires, by donation or commission, public art, or in other words how does any single piece of public art come to be in the space it occupies?

Defining public art is problematic, as I discovered, after initially making assumptions about it “simply” being art outside the four walls of a gallery or museum. With the ubiquity of public art programs and installations at airports, transit stations, hospitals and other institutional sites¹⁸⁹, public art is as much an indoor as outdoor practice. Trying to place a single work into one category can be an exercise in not-defining: much as I had trouble with categorizing *The Games Are Open* or *Monument for East Vancouver*, others face similar conundrums. New York Times writer Holland Cotter doesn’t know where to place Maya Lin’s *Storm King Wavefield*: “Neither fatalistic nor utopian, commemorative nor history-free, natural nor artificial, unstable nor fixed, it is a puzzle to ponder but also—first things last—a soul-soothing place of retreat.”¹⁹⁰

For most citizens encountering public art, defining it isn’t uppermost in their minds; they like it or they hate it or they don’t recognize it as art; they laugh or get angry or they are indifferent to it; they avoid it or they interact with it or they are comforted by its familiarity. For me, public art has become a fascinating aspect of our artistic and sociological response to sites, in which an individual or a group has imposed an artistic enterprise in a space where I, perhaps like others who encounter it, didn’t necessarily expect to find art. That, for me, is what prompted my enquiry, and it continues to inform

¹⁸⁹ YVR Airport art program, <http://www.yvr.ca/en/about/art-architecture.aspx>; Canada Line art program, <http://www.thecanadaline.com/Art-Community.tsp>; VGH and UBC Hospital Foundation art program does not have a website for its art, but the two Vancouver hospitals have over 1,000 works donated by artists and collectors. Gerry Nakano, Major Gifts Assistant, VGH and UBC Hospital Foundation, email to author. 20 June 2012.

¹⁹⁰ Holland Cotter, “Where the Ocean Meets the Mountains,” *New York Times* 9 May 2009, C23.

my experience of the city. In the process of interviewing the artists, curators, and others for the documentaries that accompany this text, I discovered that public art is, at least in part, a public provocateur—an event, episode, creation that by its very publicness prompts ideas, connections, relationships that are spontaneously generated within the space between art and public.

With regard to the second question, my exploration of how art and site influence one another, I assert that public art can be experienced as being in some conversation with its situation, whether that is on a living room wall or in the middle of a beach; this conversation is three-way, between the art and the site and the person experiencing the art, whether that is by visual, tactile, or auditory means. The conversation flows in all directions: from art to site, site to art, art to viewer, viewer to art, site to viewer, and viewer to site. Each work of art in a public space and its location makes a unique conversation, and the psychosocial implications and effects of that conversation is an area for further research.

The third question, addressing the processes of public art's creation, installation and management, I bore witness to with my camera throughout the filming, from recording Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser and the student volunteers building their sculpture, to my many interviews with those involved in curating, constructing, installing, managing, and critiquing public art.¹⁹¹

Writing From the Documentary

This was my first project as director, cameraman, researcher, interviewer and editor. Doing all these roles was challenging, but the reward was having complete control over the material as I shaped my ideas and aesthetic choices in editing. I was

¹⁹¹ What I regret not being able to film, after several requests were politely turned down, was a Public Art Committee meeting at City Hall and a private consultation between developer and art consultant. I still want to record this, as it would de-mystify the process of public art selection.

writing the early drafts of this paper as I was editing the documentary footage, and found switching between the two modes of thinking challenging, as the film editing employed right-brain thinking in the visual shorthand of intercutting, whereas the paper required left-brain order and logic. Also, the paper referenced the documentaries, which meant the three episodes had to be more or less complete before they could be written about.

As my analysis has indicated, and as is perhaps obvious to most who have considered such questions before, public art and its relationship to the people who encounter it and the sites it occupies is complex and many-layered. For some—Cartiere, Miles, Selwood, Senie, and the others I have cited—these questions prompt theorizing and categorizing. For others, including some of the artists I’ve met and interviewed, it is more about the process of discovery and the realization of that process. My research has opened new pathways of understanding art in general, public art specifically, which hitherto I had been unaware of. At the same time, I have enjoyed public art simply for what it is. Art can be interpreted and imbued with multiple meanings, but it can also *be*. Walking through Stanley Park’s forest one day in 2010, my wife and I turned a corner on Lover’s Walk and found a carved boulder of blackened cedar segments¹⁹² set among salal and ferns: how unexpected! how mysterious! how wonderful!

¹⁹² *Listen* (2009), by John Hemsworth and Peter von Tiesenhausen, is described as an orb with a cedar ball inside it, “carved from cedar remnants of the wind storm of 2006...meant as a place of reflection, an opportunity to find a silence between ourselves and the environment.” Artist’s statement, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.
http://vancouver.ca/parks/arts/spea/p_jp.htm

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Public Art | Private Views: Exploring Art in Public Spaces

PA 1. *Köbberling and Kaltwasser build nothing to last* (19:15)

German artists Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser struggle to create a work utilizing cast-off material from the 2010 Winter Olympics, within a tight budget and timeframe, exemplifying the personal and artistic compromises artists make when working in the public realm.

PA 2. *Responding to Site* (26:58)

2.1 Liz Magor: LightShed

Responding to history, Liz Magor's *Light Shed* is all that reminds us of Coal Harbour's industrial past.

2.2 Ken Lum: Three Works

Ken Lum's *Monument for East Vancouver* turns a former symbol of gang rebellion into one of civic pride.

2.3 Lorna Brown and Clint Burnham: Digital Natives

Curators Lorna Brown and Clint Burnham, working with aboriginal translators and artists, employ social media on a commercial billboard in their *Digital Natives* project to counter hegemonic narrative around First Nations issues.

PA 3. *Vancouver's Public Art Program* (17:00)

The history and development of Vancouver's public art program from the perspective of the man who has run the program since its inception, Bryan Newson, with comments by gallery curators Bill Jeffries and Scott Watson.

Appendix B.

Consent Form

Thank you for your participation in my documentary project Public Art – Private Views, which serves as my MA thesis for Graduate Liberal Studies at SFU, an interdisciplinary program for working adults. The filming continues, and I will be editing it over the winter and into next spring.

Any graduate project involving human subjects must comply with Simon Fraser University's ethical research guidelines. While this film is not a traditional research project, it does involve your participation, and I have, with SFU's consent and advice, created a dual-purpose photo release and research consent form, which is included with this letter, along with a stamped return envelope.

Would you please take a minute to read over the enclosed form, sign it and have your assistant return it to me in the enclosed envelope? Its language is standard for both the film release, which is necessary if the film were to be sold to any broadcaster, as well as complying with SFU's required consent from a research subject.

If you have any concerns or questions please do not hesitate to email or call me.

This project is a documentary film exploration of what public art is, the processes by which a city decides what art to show and where to locate it within the public sphere, and its reception by the public.

Part of this project includes interviews of experts in the film industry, political policy developers, with respect to public art and other notable persons selected from the public record. The interviews will focus on how the interviewees look critically at the process of public art as it is practiced in Vancouver. In addition there may be filming of persons in a public space where public art is present.

If you discuss the policy of agencies or companies with whom you are associated you should know that I have not approached any companies or agencies for approval of these interviews.

Because you are a person who has been influential in the development and analysis of policy having to do with public art your contributions to this project will not be confidential unless you specifically ask for that. There are no risks to making a contribution to this study and you may withdraw at any time from these interviews and your opinions will not be used for this project.

I am also requesting that you agree to the following authorisation:

I hereby authorise and grant to Michael Cox (the Producer) the right to record me (picture and/or voice) on film and/or videotape, or by digital media for audio only, or by audio and visual, or by visual only reproduction, and/or by textual transcription (referred to as "the Recording"). This authorisation includes the right to edit the recording into a film and/or video program which may include other recordings and material the working title of which will be "Public Art - Private Views" ("the Program"). This authorisation also includes the right to screen and broadcast, or otherwise distribute, the Recording in the Program, and the right to use and to license others to use the recording in all media throughout the world for the purposes of publicity, advertising, sales and promotion of the program.

I hereby release the Producer from any infringement or violation of personal and/or property rights of any sort based upon the use of the Recording. I acknowledge that the Producer owns now and shall own all rights in the future the title and interest (including copyright) in the Recording.

I further acknowledge that the Producer is not obliged to use the Recording.

I warrant that I have full power to enter into this Release and that the terms of this Release do not in any way conflict with any existing commitment on my part.

Reference to "the Recording" in this Release includes any and all edited versions made by the Producer and, further, includes any previously recorded material of me made by the Producer.

If you have concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Director of the Office of Research Ethics at Simon Fraser University, [followed by contact information current at the time of the project].

Appendix C.

Credits

Artists: Martin Kaltwasser, Folke Koeberling, Ken Lum, Liz Magor, Holly Schmidt.

Curators: Lorna Brown, Clint Burnham, Barbara Cole, Bill Jeffries, Scott Watson.

Others: Heather Deal, city councillor; Bryan Newson, program manager, City of Vancouver public art program; Douglas Todd, journalist, Vancouver Sun; Desmond Wong, design student.

Contributing footage and music: Alex Beim, Olympic closing ceremonies footage; Barbara Cole, stills in "Koeberling & Kaltwasser"; Mark Curry, timelapse sequence in "Digital Natives"; Digi G'Alessio, music; Miss Christie Lee, for her song "Experience" in "Digital Natives"; Janet McDonald, images from the Georgia Straight in "Ken Lum"; Sarah Schachner, series title music.

Appendix D.

Artists and Art Depicted

Artists and their works depicted are listed *in order of appearance*. Where works appear more than once, only the first instance is listed.

- PA 1 Folke Köbberling, Martin Kaltwasser: *The Games Are Open* (2010)
- PA 2.1 Liz Magor: *LightShed* (2004)
- PA 2.2 Ken Lum: *Four Boats Stranded, Red and Yellow, Black and White* (2001)
Monument for East Vancouver (2010)
From Shangri-la to Shangri-la (2010)
- PA 2.3 Clint Burnham, Lorna Brown, curators: *Digital Natives* (2011)
- PA 3 Vancouver Public Art:
Ron Terada: *The Words Don't Fit the Picture* (2010)
Shu-ren Cheng: *China Gate* (2005)
Alvin Kanak: *Inukshuk* (1986)
J.Seward Johnson: *Photo Session* (1984)
Gerhard Juchum: *Fisher Hauling in the Net* (1976)
Sebastian: *Throne of Nezahualcoyotl* (1978, refinished 2011)
Alan Chun Hung: *Gate to the Northwest Passage* (1980)
J. Seward Johnson: *Search* (1975)
Natalie McHaffie: *Solo* (1986)
James Macleod Hurry: *Pauline Johnson Memorial* (1922)
Sidney March: *Lord Stanley* (1960)
Charles Marega: *Captain Vancouver* (1936)
Gerhard Juchum: *Lovers II* (1977)
Charles Marega: *Untitled (Lions: pair)* (1939)
Noel Best, Chris Dikeakos: *Lookout* (1999)
Althea Thauberger: *Ecce Homo* (2011)
David Robinson: *Equestrian Monument* (2010)
Alan Storey: *Pendulum* (1987)
Douglas Coupland: *Digital Orca* (2010)

inges idée: *The Drop* (2010)

Interaction Lab: *Yaletown Illumination* (2011)

Michel Goulet: *Echoes* (2005, installed 2010)

Alan McWilliams: *Untitled (Globes)* (2008)

Joe Fafard: *Royal Sweet Diamond* (2001)

Couer de Lion MacCarthy: *Angel of Victory* (1921)

Ken Lum: *A Tale of Two Children: a Work for Strathcona* (2005)

Jerry Pethick: *Time Top* (2006)

Myfanwy MacLeod: *The Birds* (2010)

Liam Gillick: *Lying on top of a building the clouds looked no nearer than when I was lying in the street* (2009)

Bernar Venet: *217.5 Arcs x 13* (2005)

Wolfgang and Anna-Maria Kubach: *Horizontal Column* (1975)

Hiroshi Akiyama: *For the Botanical Garden* (1975)

David Ruben Piqtoukun: *Observing Your Society* (1975)

Jaume Plensa: *We* (2008)

Yue Minjun: *Amaze-ing Laughter* (2009)

Wang Shugang: *Meeting* (2009)

Franklin Allen and Ian Bateson: *Terry Fox Memorial* (1984-2011)

Alan Storey: *Password* (1994)

Mark Lewis: *Collection* (1994)

Doug Taylor: *Khenko* (2006)

Ken Lum: *Monument for East Vancouver* (2010)

Dennis Oppenheim: *Device to Root Out Evil* (1997, 2005-2008)

Don Vaughn: *Marking High Tide / Waiting for Low Tide* (1996)

Vince Dumoulin: *Untitled (historical mural)* (2010)

Marko Simcic: *Park* (2008)

Heather and Ivan Morison: *Plaza* (2011)

Greg Snider: *Project for a Works Yard* (2004)

Tania Ruiz Gutiérrez: *Garde-temps* (2010)

Jill Anholt: *Scopes of Site* (2003)

Mowry Baden: *Fulcrum of Vision* (2003)

Buster Simpson: *Brush With Illumination* (1998)

Ernie Miller, Alan Tregobov: *Street Light* (1997)

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer: *Vectoral Elevation* (2010)
Isabelle Hayeur: *Fire with Fire (Inspiration)* (2010)
Igor Mitoraj: *Eros Bendato Scrippolato* (2009)
Jun Ren: *Freezing Water #7* (2009)
Ken Lum: *Monument for East Vancouver* (2010)
Liz Magor: *LightShed* (2004)
Tangible Interaction: *Digital Graffiti* (2010)
Douglas Coupland: *Terry Fox Memorial* (2011)
Marie Khouri: *Le Banc* (2010)
Gwen Boyle: *Suan Phan: Abacus* (2005)
Bruce Wilson: *AIDS Memorial* (2004)
Beth Alber: *Marker of Change* (1997)
Russell Smith, Wayne Alfred, Beau Dick: *Ga'akstalas* (undated)
Bill Reid: *Killer Whale / Chief of the Undersea World* (1984)
Jack Harman: *Harry Winston Jerome* (1986)
John Hemsworth, Peter von Tiesenhausen: *Listen* (2009)
Sophie Ryder: *Minotaur With Hare* (2005)
Claudio Rivera-Seguel: *Acquire Conform Consume Invest* (2010)
Kelly Mark: *Hold That Thought* (2010)
Sorel Etrog: *King and Queen* (1990/98, installed 2009)
Dennis Oppenheim: *Engagement* (1997, installed 2005)
Gunda Förster: *Ice Light* (2010)

Seattle Public Art:

Alexander Liberman: *Olympic Iliad* (1984)
John Fleming: *Grass Blades* (2002)
Paul Sorey: *Salmon Waves* (2001)
Louise Brougeois: *Father and Son* (2004)
Richard Serra: *Wake* (2004)
Henry Moore: *Vertebrae* (1971)