

# **In the Public Eye**

**Beyond the Statue in the Park**



## **EUPHRAT GALLERY**

**Reception: October 16, 6-8 pm**

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*In the Public Eye: Beyond the Statue in the Park* explores issues and ideas related to art in public places. The exhibition reveals the prevalence of public art and the impact it can have. Cities, developers, college campuses, non-profit organizations, artists, and the viewing public are increasingly involved in decision-making regarding art in public places. Through art, models, and documentation (photographs, slides and written materials), *In the Public Eye* offers the opportunity to explore questions such as: How can an artwork reflect local history? What makes a public art program successful? How do some public artworks become living places or personified objects?

The exhibition will expand each week with additions, for example, that relate to new developments. Following the exhibition, a set of photographs, texts, and suggested discussion topics on public art will be available to schools and community groups on a limited basis.

Among the artists and organizations on which the exhibition focuses are Maria Alquilar; Anonymous; Mark A. Brest van Kempen; Center for Southern Folklore; Kevin Fang; Reiko Goto; Maren Hassinger; Edgar Heap of Birds; Maya Ying Lin; Thomas Marsh; Richard Misrach; Salvatore Pecoraro; Francisco Perez; The Power of Place; Public Art Works (Falkirk Cultural Center); the Ribbs family; Niki de Saint Phalle; Seattle Arts Commission; Elizabeth Sisco, Louis Hock, and David Avalos; Deborah Small and David Avalos with James Luna and William T. Weeks; George Smith; The Stuart Collection; Walker Art Center; Wendy Watriss; John Wilson.

**October 2 - December 6, 1990**

**Hours:** Tu, W, Th 11-4; W eve 7-9

Open 11-2 Sat (October 20 - November 17) and before selected Flint Center events. Open to tour groups by appointment.

**Reception: Tuesday, October 16, 6-8**

**EUPHRAT GALLERY**

De Anza College, Cupertino, CA 95014 (408)864-8836



## Public art dialog:

"A public agency that builds large shapes in larger spaces is inescapably involved in aesthetics... To leave aesthetics to accident and abide by the rules of function alone is to waste an important public opportunity. Crumpled buildings and boxlike offices dedicated to bare economic necessity crab the public spirit, whereas spaces and shapes dedicated to the human spirit are an encouragement, expanding the will." Alan Sagner (Chair, Board of Commissioners, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey) at unveiling of Louise Nevelson's *Sky Gate*, One World Trade Center, 1978. *Art for the Public: The Collection of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey* (New York: 1985).

"Our environment is not merely decorative. It is a major force in determining who we are and what we shall become." Patricia Johanson, in "From the Other Side: Public Artists on Public Art," *Art Journal*, Winter 1989, p. 338.



Niki de Saint Phalle, *Sun God*, 1983. Fiberglass sculpture, 14'. Concrete arch, 15'. Photograph courtesy of The Stuart Collection. An annual *Sun God* festival, with food and music, is held every spring at the University of California in San Diego. People get married under the *Sun God*. It has been dressed with earphones and "Sony Walkbird" — with cap and gown — with a "Rambird" headband and machete. Once a nest was built around it, complete with a hatching egg. Photo credit: Philip Schlotz Ritterman.

"I [propose] that public art is art in the mind of the public, that the publicness of place has been largely superseded by the publicness of information, that objects in plazas are springboards at best (*Tilted Arc* is certainly best known as a magazine picture)." Rebecca Solnit, "The Symbol on the Plaza," *Artweek*, January 11, 1990, p. 20.

"There isn't a lot of 'public space' for art. Much is privatized, such as plazas and malls. In the absence of real physical space available to artists, artists are turning to media space, informational space, but virtually all of that is privately owned. How to gain access to information, who controls information — this is important to the artist who wishes a public forum for debate. In the San Diego area, information about multicultural heritage is conveyed by the tourist industry, curio shops, and public education. An artist's book for discussing alternative views in the public schools is one avenue. Being creative in the future involves being creative with the past. It's time for artists to share in the unfolding of history, to promote the sharing of history." David Avalos, in conversation with Jan Rindfleisch, August 1990.

"Much of the most interesting work has been temporary, provisional, smaller scale, and often unfunded. These include the projects with chalked text and sprayed stencils...painted benches, altered billboards, event 'sculpture,' transit art, roof-top designs, and other transit-visible graffiti and occasionally even funded temporary public installations. (I remember particularly Christy Rupp's *Social Progress*, a snail pulling a giant corncob, in lower Manhattan.)" John Pitman Weber, in "From the Other Side: Public Artists on Public Art," *Art Journal*, Winter 1989, p. 345.

Replica of *Goddess of Democracy*, 1990. Plaster, 9.5' tall. Created by Thomas Marsh and students from the Bay Area who remain anonymous for reasons of security. Fashioned after original sculpture by Kevin Fang and students in China who remain anonymous for reasons of security. The original *Goddess of Democracy* stood in Tiananmen Square during the student demonstrations in Spring 1989. The replica is used for Bay Area demonstrations related to the massacre that put an end to the demonstrations for major reforms.





"In rural Korea, women have created a form of public art for centuries, using a minimum of resources. They would find a special, spiritual spot, usually under a tree, and start to build a pile of stones beneath it. Each stone would be placed with a wish or a prayer. Some stones were painted. Strips of colorful fabric were tied from the tree and placed between the stones. Some piles were so large that one would need a ladder to place a stone on top." Jung Choi, in conversation with Jan Rindfleisch.

The bottle pile beside your shotgun house grows bigger— empty bottles;  
the beers are brown,  
The whiskeys clear, and milk of magnesia comes in bottles of translucent  
blue.

But on this summer day you've cut a green bay tree  
sheared the leaves away, stubbed the branches  
Stuck it upright in your yard...

And slipped bottles over the stubs...

Your bluebottle tree, a hard-won stay against confusion.

"The Bluebottle Tree," James Seay, *Mississippi Folklore Register*, Vol. III, no. 3 (1969), p. 108.

"I see public and other socially involved art as the best channels for independent creative thinking. The notion that avant-garde art has to be controversial and subversive is an outdated remnant of modernism. It is now time for art to start functioning again within its social context." Athena Tacha, in "From the Other Side: Public Artists on Public Art," *Art Journal*, Winter 1989, p. 343.

"In public art, instead of trying to get the sculpture without the controversy, we might ask that artists think of how to generate the controversy without bothering with the sculpture. It's the conversation that makes it public." Rebecca Solnit, during focus group at the Euphrat Gallery, July 13, 1990.

Cover photo: Untitled, Wendy Watriss, 1987. Detail. Photograph from Watriss's series on the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, Washington D.C., by Maya Ying Lin. "It has a life of its own. People stand and stare at it. They touch it. They run their fingers over and over the names of the dead. They lean against it. They trace the names and they cry. Men stand guard for the others who have died, and for those still missing. It is an altar where people bring the remnants of war, their feelings about war and death, the relics of personal lives and tributes to the dead." Wendy Watriss

"When thousands of visitors arrive to stand, each year, before Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, with its seeming unending scroll, a powerful ritual of naming is enacted, individual experiences occur and collective meaning is generated. The controversy surrounding the work's creation was but the awareness that such generation of meaning would take place and that it might have political implications." Suzanne Lacy, "Fractured Space," *Art in the Public Interest*, edited by Arlene Raven. UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, London, 1989, pp. 299-300.

Additional notes from the focus group on public art held at the Euphrat Gallery on July 13:

"Siqueiros talked about the need for murals to relate to their architectural spaces in order to create a public experience." Dewey Crumpler.

"Then maintaining and preserving the mural and its public experience could be expanded to maintenance and preservation of a neighborhood." Jan Rindfleisch.

"Public experiences also include concerts in the park and poetry readings." José Antonio Burciaga.

"— and guerilla public art, demonstrations, street theatre, altered street signs and billboards." Rebecca Solnit.

"— and efforts to preserve the Baylands, for example." Ulysses Pichon.

"Some neighborhoods are artworks. Gentrification, changing the makeup and the people, may nullify the original reason for being. Memphis's Beale Street, Providence's Benevolent Street. Soho turns to Noho." Brenda Bell Brown, after the focus group.

*In the Public Eye* curators: Jan Rindfleisch with Patricia Albers, Diana E. Argabrite, Brenda Bell Brown. A focus group of artists, community people, and educators participated in the development of this exhibition: David Allen, José Antonio Burciaga, Dewey Crumpler, Bob Hanamura, Salvatore Pecoraro, Ulysses Pichon, Rebecca Solnit, Barbara Solomon, Nora Villagran. Concepts and additional assistance: Edith Argabrite, Josh Baer Gallery, Jung Choi, Fraenkel Gallery, Francisco Perez, Javier Salazar, Carol and Peter Selz.



Maren Hassinger, *Weeds*, 1986. Wire rope, twenty units, 4'x50'x75'. At the Houston Festival. Photo credit: Mary Margaret.



Euphrat programming is funded in part by De Anza College. Additional funders include Apple Computer, Inc., Arts Council of Santa Clara County, bas Homes, California Arts Council, City of Cupertino, City of Sunnyvale, Community Foundation of Santa Clara County, Cupertino Educational Endowment Foundation, Cupertino National Bank, De Anza Student Body, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Junior League of Palo Alto, Pacific Bell, PG&E, Tandem Computers, and Varian Associates.

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