

ROUTLEDGE ADVANCES IN ART AND VISUAL STUDIES

The Uses of Art in Public Space

Edited by

Julia Lossau and Quentin Stevens

ROUTLEDGE



The Uses of Art in Public Space

**Edited by
Julia Lossau and Quentin Stevens**

First published 2015
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,
an informa business*

© 2015 Taylor & Francis

The right of the editors to be identified as the author of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark Notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The uses of art in public space / edited by Julia Lossau and Quentin Stevens.
pages cm — (Routledge advances in art and visual studies ; 10)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Art and society. 2. Public art. I. Lossau, Julia, editor. II. Stevens, Quentin, 1969– editor.

N72.S6U84 2014

701'.03—dc23

2014032572

ISBN: 978-1-138-79760-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-75701-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

The Uses of Art in Public Space

This book links two fields of interest which are too seldom considered together: the production and critique of art in public space and social behaviour in the public realm. Whereas most writing about public art has focused on the aesthetic, cultural and political intentions and processes that shape its production, this edited collection examines a variety of public artworks from the perspective of their actual everyday use. Contributors are interested in the rich diversity of people's engagements with public artworks across various spatial and temporal scales; encounters which do not limit themselves to the representational aspects of the art, and which are not necessarily as the artist, curator or sponsor intended. Case studies consider a broad range of public art, including commissioned and unofficial artworks, memorials, street art, street furniture, performance art, sound art and media installations.

Julia Lossau is Professor of Urban Geography at the University of Bremen, Germany.

Quentin Stevens is Associate Professor of Urban Design and Director of the Centre for Design and Society at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

Routledge Advances in Art and Visual Studies

- 1 Ethics and Images of Pain**
Edited by Asbjørn Grønstad & Henrik Gustafsson
- 2 Meanings of Abstract Art**
Between Nature and Theory
Edited by Paul Crowther and Isabel Wünsche
- 3 Genealogy and Ontology of the Western Image and its Digital Future**
John Lechte
- 4 Representations of Pain in Art and Visual Culture**
Edited by Maria Pia Di Bella and James Elkins
- 5 Manga's Cultural Crossroads**
Edited by Jaqueline Berndt and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer
- 6 Mobility and Fantasy in Visual Culture**
Edited by Lewis Johnson
- 7 Spiritual Art and Art Education**
Janis Lander
- 8 Art in the Asia-Pacific**
Intimate Publics
Edited by Larissa Hjorth, Natalie King, and Mami Kataoka
- 9 Performing Beauty in Participatory Art and Culture**
Falk Heinrich
- 10 The Uses of Art in Public Space**
Edited by Julia Lossau and Quentin Stevens

Figures

2.1	<i>The Arrival</i> (Frank Meisler, 2006), Liverpool Street Station, London	25
2.2	<i>Cloud Gate</i> (Anish Kapoor, 2006), Grant Park, Chicago	27
2.3	<i>Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe</i> (Peter Eisenman, 2005), Berlin	28
3.1	Door with stickers, Degrares St subway, Melbourne	37
3.2	Love locks on Ponte Milvio, Rome	42
3.3	Love lock attached to rubbish bin outside the Pantheon, Rome	43
3.4	Love locks attached to the Southbank Footbridge, Melbourne	44
3.5	Stall selling padlocks and engraving services, Ponte Milvio, Rome	45
4.1	Audience interacting with <i>Aarhus by Light</i> (CAVI, 2009)	56
4.2	A luminous creature from <i>Aarhus by Light</i> (CAVI, 2009)	57
4.3	The <i>CO2nfession/CO2mmitment</i> booth (Martin Brynskov, 2009)	59
4.4	<i>City Bug Report</i> , media façade on the city hall tower in Aarhus, connected to mobile devices, websites and open government data (CAVI, 2009)	61
5.1	Nelson with union flag bicorn: curated guerrilla intervention by milliners Treacy and Stephen Jones during London Olympics, July 30, 2012	70
5.2	Mark Quinn's <i>Alison Lapper Pregnant</i> , Trafalgar Square, London	73
5.3	Anthony Gormley's <i>One and Other</i> , Trafalgar Square, London	77
6.1	A tree being planted	89

viii *Figures*

6.2	One of the trees being officially dedicated. The name of the person the tree is dedicated to is marked on a stone at the foot of the tree	89
6.3	Flowers and presents decorate a tree dedicated to an adolescent who lost his life in an accident	90
7.1	Participants losing and finding their way on the Grangetown History and Change audio walk	105
7.2	Participants actively listening to and investing in Grangetown	108
8.1	The Vilakazi Street Precinct: a tourist and commemorative township	119
8.2	The first letter of the Vilakazi hand signs sculpture	121
8.3	The 1976 uprisings sculpture, an artwork meaningless for the local publics?	123
8.4	Targeted vandalism to make public and commemorative artworks unusable?	127
8.5	The informal 1976 uprisings murals: a different use of art?	128
9.1	The Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux	132
9.2	The Cross of Sacrifice	134
9.3	The War Stone	135
9.4	Standard headstones for soldiers identified as Australian	136
9.5	The rural setting of the Australian National Memorial, looking from the tower to the adjoining cemetery	137
10.1	Location of artworks in the Quartier International de Montréal	153
10.2	Workers sitting and eating lunch on the low wall around the Monument to Queen Victoria	156
10.3	A teenager skateboarding around the works by Ju Ming on the public art platform, with a child imitating the sculpture's pose in the background	158
10.4	Workers sitting and eating lunch on the benches and steps surrounding <i>La Joute</i>	160
10.5	The monument covered with signs during Occupons Montréal	162
10.6	All kinds of objects were stacked on Ju Ming's <i>Taichi Shadow Boxing</i> and <i>Taichi Single Whip</i> during the occupation	163
11.1	<i>Santa Claus</i> (2001), a 6-metre-high bronze sculpture by Paul McCarthy in Eendrachtsplein, Rotterdam	168

11.2	On the occasion of <i>Santa Claus</i> 's placement in Eendrachtsplein in 2008, Sculpture International Rotterdam published a one-shot newspaper edition titled 'Free Santa', which gives a clear impression of the heated public debate about <i>Santa Claus</i>	171
11.3	In 2010, the local entrepreneurs' association initiated the emancipatory project 'A yellow jersey for <i>Santa Claus</i> ', entailing a group of female residents knitting pieces that were assembled into one jersey	176
12.1	Visitors explore <i>Shibboleth</i> (Doris Salcedo), Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London	186
12.2	Posing and performing in <i>Bread Line</i> (George Segal) at Memorial to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Washington, D.C.	188
12.3	Displaying US flag and tributes on statue of George Washington (Henry Kirke Brown), Union Square Park, New York immediately after September 11, 2001	189
12.4	Studying tributes, Veterans Day 2012, Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Maya Lin), Washington	191
12.5	Occupy Wall Street participants occupying <i>Joie de Vivre</i> (Mark Di Suvero) in Zuccotti Park, New York	193
12.6	<i>Pulling Down Statue of King George III at Bowling Green, New York</i>	196
12.7	Participants join designers Lauren Crahan and John Hartmann in lifting <i>Lighthearted</i> , Times Square, New York	199

Acknowledgements

This book developed out of two events. The first was a pair of themed sessions of the 32nd International Geographical Congress in Cologne, Germany, in August 2012. The second was a public symposium hosted by RMIT University's Design Research Institute in Melbourne, Australia, in March 2013. For financial and organisational support for those events, we wish to thank the Geography Institute at the University of Cologne, the research committee of the RMIT School of Architecture and Design, the RMIT Design Research Institute, the Art in Public Space program and the Art, Cities and Transformation Research Group of the RMIT School of Art, and the RMIT Foundation for providing Julia with an International Research Exchange Fellowship. Quentin's work on this project was supported by a Future Fellowship from the Australian Research Council.

Portions of Nicolas Whybrow's chapter appeared in an earlier form in his book *Art and the City* (2011). An earlier version of Martin Zebracki's chapter appeared in *Social & Cultural Geography*, volume 13, number 7 (2012). All translations of quotations and terminology from other languages are the contributors' own unless otherwise specified.

We would like to thank many scholars and artists who either gave or proposed presentations for the two events, which helped inform and enrich the material presented in this book, in particular Charlotte Bagger-Brandt, Ruth Fazakerley, Mirko Guaralda, Anton Hasell, Matthew Lamb, Bettina Lamm, Kate MacNeill, Anthony McInnery, Christopher Rawlinson, Jane Rendell, Skate Sculpture and Ruth Woods. We would also like to thank Clare McCracken for help with background research and Lea Willeke for assistance with the book's production. Thanks also to Felisa Salvago-Keyes and Andrew Weckenmann at Routledge and, last but not least, to our authors for splendid cooperation.

Julia Lossau (Bremen) and
Quentin Stevens (Melbourne)

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi

1 Framing Art and Its Uses in Public Space	1
QUENTIN STEVENS AND JULIA LOSSAU	

PART I: Perception

2 The Ergonomics of Public Art	19
QUENTIN STEVENS	
3 Graffiti, Street Art and Theories of Stigmergy	33
LACHLAN MACDOWALL	

PART II: Interaction

4 Media Architecture: Engaging Urban Experiences in Public Space	51
MARTIN BRYNSKOV, PETER DALSGAARD AND KIM HALSKOV	
5 Trafalgar Square: Of Play, Plinths, Publics, Pigeons and Participation	67
NICOLAS WHYBROW	

PART III: Participation

6 Tree Planting: The Use of Public Art as Social Practice	83
JULIA LOSSAU	

- 7 Sound Response: The Public Reception of Audio Walks 98
ANGHARAD SAUNDERS AND KATE MOLES

PART IV: Appropriation

- 8 The Non-use, Re-use, Mis-use and Counter-use of Public Art in the Vilakazi Street Precinct, Soweto, South Africa 115
PAULINE GUINARD
- 9 'You Aren't an Aussie if You Don't Come': National Identity and Visitors' Practices at the Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux 131
SHANTI SUMARTOJO

PART V: Reception

- 10 The Social Life of Artworks in Public Spaces: A Study of the Publics in the Quartier International de Montréal 149
LAURENT VERNET
- 11 Art Engagers: What Does Public Art Do to Its Publics? The Case of the 'Butt Plug Gnome' 167
MARTIN ZEBRACKI
- 12 As Prop and Symbol: Engaging with Works of Art in Public Space 183
KAREN A. FRANCK
- List of Contributors* 201
Index 205

1 Framing Art and Its Uses in Public Space

Quentin Stevens and Julia Lossau

This book examines the everyday use of artworks in public settings. The forms and means of art, and of public art specifically, vary considerably between different national and regional contexts, having followed different development trajectories. As a consequence, the geographically widespread studies collected here consider art in public spaces from a perspective much broader than the 'plop art' of large abstract sculptures in corporate plazas and wider, too, than that defined by many official programs of 'public art', which often determine or imply particular forms, sites, production processes, audiences, kinds of interaction, and particular preconceptions about ownership and value (Cartiere 2008). The book examines a diversity of commissioned and unofficial artworks, including sculptures, memorials, landscaping works, street art, street furniture, performance art, sound art, media installations and other hybrid and emerging forms of creative expression in the public realm. Public engagement with such works varies greatly. The book's contributors show that people's encounters with art are not limited to passive reception, and they are not necessarily as the artist, curator or sponsor intended. People seem to make use of art in public spaces on their own terms. These varied uses reflect the disparate, often unanticipated audiences that the art is exposed to and the freedoms of feeling and action that public settings often allow. We feel that an examination of the varied perceptions of 'users' and actions around art in the public realm can provide fresh insight into art's purposes, benefits and reception. The diverse formal and experiential qualities of art, and the distinctive uses these enable, also shed new light on the design, use and meaning of public space more broadly.

THE 'FUNCTION' OF ART

There is something paradoxical in examining the function of art. Avant-gardist notions of an autonomous 'art for art's sake' that developed during the twentieth century defined art in opposition to practical utility. The modernist idea of art as the medium of a self-determined and autonomous subject stands in contrast to earlier understandings. In previous centuries,

artworks were quintessentially useful in that they naturally served the needs of those who paid for them, be it the clergy trying to strengthen believers' faith by installing ornate altars in churches, or the gentry trying to impress the common folk by installing statues and monuments on the streets. Under such circumstances, artists felt rather like suppliers and less like autonomous individuals who produce independent objects with no practical purpose (Warnke 1989).

When 'public art' emerged as a distinct form of art practice in the late 1960s, it posed a threat to the avant-gardist notion of art as the expression of an independent genius. From the outset, and by definition, public art was invested with a social or communal focus that included processes of communication with the public. In contrast to a modernist notion of 'fine' art set apart from the world and its everyday needs, art in public locations that was intended for broad public consumption has often been expected to be 'site specific' and socially relevant and offer practical benefits. Such accountability explains why public art was often denigrated by the official art world. It also explains why the idea of art being functional seems far less disquieting when it is applied to art in public space. Public artworks may be understood as useful in terms of their properties as material objects, sensory experiences, spatial contexts or representational discourses.

Most writing about art in the public realm comes from art critics and art historians, and focuses on the aesthetic, cultural and political intentions and processes that shape its production (Lacy 1994, Kwon 2004, Rendell 2006, Cartiere and Willis 2008). Artworks are often analysed in terms of their instrumental or symbolic roles within a particular ideologically driven activity, such as developing community identity; communicating history; attracting new visitors, residents and businesses; or enhancing property values. The leading critiques of public art focus on the question of publicness, highlighting the passive, depoliticised role of citizens as consumers (Phillips 1988). A key 'politically correct' implication of these critiques is that good public art involves the public directly in its meaning and its making (Bishop 2006:181, Sharp et al. 2005). Our primary focus on uses and practices rather than on artworks differentiates this book from the substantial recent literature that has examined the public's participatory or 'relational' engagement in the production, reception and evaluation of art, for example Bourriaud (2002), Kester (2011), and Bishop (2012). That literature mostly presents artists and curators defining the means and terms of public action. Situating the art in gallery spaces facilitates this control. At one 'utopian' extreme, Bourriaud's relational aesthetics involves participatory art practices where the artist completely circumscribe both the art's publics and its uses; the art is conceived 'without [. . .] "usefulness" in the world outside of the social environment created by the work' (Lacy 2008:23). Participatory art also often tends toward clear functional intentions, as installations or performances are consciously designed to enable, invite or even provoke people to engage with them in certain ways (Bishop 2004). The

title of Bishop's 2012 book, *Artificial Hells*, implies a trenchant critique of the strictures of public engagement within participatory art. But more affirmatively, she suggests her title also 'appeals for more bold, affective and troubling forms of participatory art and criticism' (Bishop 2012:6–7). We suggest our book illustrates some such possibilities, if perhaps in indirect and unexpected ways. Beyond art scholars' political and aesthetic critiques of formal collaborations between publics and artists, our book emphasises the scope that the context of the public realm offers for disconnection or outright antagonism between artists' intended outcomes and the public's actions in relation to them.

The contributions gathered in this book show how people respond to artworks after they have been released into the public realm. In some of the cases explored here, there is no original guiding artist, curator or sponsor; aesthetic and experiential outcomes develop through the cumulative actions of many members of the public. This book thus explores forms of public agency that are largely independent of the art world and its ideas. In doing so, we aim to challenge the oppositions between 'active' and 'passive' spectatorship and singular and collective authorship that are wrapped up in the trope of 'the spectacle' (Bishop 2012). We agree with Lacy's assertion (2008:24) that 'It is time for critical unpacking of the stereotype use + art = bad art'. The research reported in this book decouples any specific value relations between art and its use. But we suggest Lacy's ambition can be pursued further than Kester's (2004; 2011) and Bishop's (2006; 2012) re-theorisations of public participation in the creation of art. Our contributors focus on the actual uses of art and the effects of those uses on what precisely is done or achieved. In this context, rather than abandoning the spectacle as a framework for interpreting the relationship between artwork and audience, this book explores the possibilities of Situationist *détournement* of the spectacle and of its implication of passive audience reception, a 'reversal of perspective' through which audiences find new uses for received images and other aesthetic forms (Vaneigem 1983:137, quoted in Plant 1992:86).

FUNCTIONS OF ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

Even the most critical studies of public art typically accept that such art is an inherently worthy investment, affirming its multiple cultural, social, aesthetic and investment benefits (Mitchell 1992; Miles 1997). But existing research generally lacks evaluation of such claims, and rarely even suggests a critical framework for doing so (Hall and Robertson 2001). What has remained relatively understudied is the ways the public responds to artworks once they are installed and what kinds of amenity, functional or otherwise, public art contributes to public spaces. Very few publicly funded artworks are actually evaluated after installation, and there is thus little

evidence about the reception and impacts, positive or negative, that public art has (Senie 2003; Cartiere and Willis 2008). Several contributions in this book question the basic presumption that public art even provides aesthetic enhancement to public spaces.

Following the emergence of public art in the 1960s as a distinct form of art practice, and the subsequent explosion in its varieties of medium, form and location, social scientists began examining the complex aspects of public art's conception, production and reception, and in particular its relation to the wider social uses of the public realm. The theoretical and empirical link most commonly made between art, functionality and the public realm sees artworks as almost inevitably being instrumentally deployed or appropriated—that is, made use of—to serve agendas of economic, physical and social transformation of urban areas (Deutsche 1996; Miles 1997; Hall and Robertson 2001; Ley 2003). Artists are, in Smith's (1996:195) classic formulation, the 'shock troops' of urban gentrification, and public art is one of their most penetrating weapons. Deutsche (1988:15), writing about 'Public Art and Its Uses' in relation to the controversy over Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, notes that

proposing aesthetic uses for the space, isolated from its social function in specific circumstances [. . .] ignores questions recently posed in a number of disciplines about differences among users and about the user as producer of the environment [. . .] discussions about the work, despite the prominence they accorded to questions of use, remained aloof from critical public issues about the uses of space in New York today: oppositions between social groups about spatial uses, the social division of the city, and the question of which residents are forcibly excluded from using the city.

In contrast to utopian approaches to art, where social engagement is hermetically confined within the process of its making, Lacy (2008:23) points to 'those who are building a case for art's usefulness in regeneration', for whom 'functionalism is [. . .] prioritized'. Public artworks are often commissioned to meet functional needs of open space users 'that in the past were the domain of landscape architecture or city planning' (Senie 1992:245). Like many concepts in public art, this continuum of engagement with functionality can be unfolded in other dimensions. 'Functional' art interventions can be seen as unsatisfactory compromises because they constrain artistic freedom and quality, because they do not function as well as ordinary street furniture but cost significantly more, or because the 'functions' they serve in fact constrain the potential social uses of their site (Deutsche 1988). The commissioning of functional public art can be seen as instrumental: an ambition by governments to justify their public expenditures and management controls on public space and an ambition by artists to access budgets allocated to public space development.

A partial counter to the materialist critique of public art sees social inclusion in the making of public art as a prospective antidote to the alienation of economically and culturally deprived social groups (Sharp et al. 2005). Critiques of gentrification and praise of community art both draw on another important thematic link between public art and social science research, looking at how artworks in public might connect to memory and sense of place (Hayden 1995; Kwon 2004). This, too, is under-researched from the perspective of actual uses. This book seeks to go beyond the prevailing reading of public art in urban gentrification and to open a range of other ways of understanding art and its value by exploring a range of uses of art that are in many cases more immediate, tangible and individual and which go beyond prescriptive ideas of function.

Accepting that art has one or another function typically involves pre-suppositions about the wants, needs and capacities of particular publics. In a keynote speech to one of the symposia that generated this book, Jane Rendell notes an important distinction between the idea of 'function' and that of 'use': use, with its connotations of 'being used', 'manipulating' and 'taking advantage of' something, implies power relations among people and objects. Focusing on use involves a shift in power dynamics away from an artwork's sponsors and makers, who intend specific 'functions', and manipulate audiences so that they will perform what the artwork prescribes. 'Use' moves the locus of attention and power to the public, who find their own purposes in the aesthetic objects and experiences presented to them. Rendell draws on Winnicott (1971:108) to argue that 'use' thus suggests a 'potential space' beyond 'function', and beyond the control of the maker, offering the individual 'an opportunity [. . .] to move from dependence to autonomy'. Rendell notes that while a public artwork may quite conventionally be seen as a transitional object, something that 'helps us adjust to the mismatch between inner and outer worlds' (following Winnicott 1953; 1967), Winnicott later emphasised that 'usage implies that the object is part of external reality', beyond the projective desires and omnipotent control of its maker or its audience (Winnicott 1969:716). Using an object requires that the subject 'must have developed a capacity to use objects' (Winnicott 1969:713). Rendell notes a range of artist-architects, including muf, Apolonija Šušteršič, Transparadiso and atelier d'architecture d'autogérée, who explore art's potential use value by critically engaging the public in wider processes of social and urban development. Rather than producing objects, what these art practices produce is 'radical subjects'.

The contributions in this book highlight that even within the scope of overtly strategic applications of public art, different actors can have very different goals. The many unanticipated uses of art by members of the public challenge implied understandings of what effects such art is supposed to have, who the audiences for such artworks are, and how people should respond to them. Unsanctioned, unofficial artworks and non-object forms

of art often resist alignment between art's economic and social capital and property values.

In her analysis of the role of public art in gentrification in Glasgow, Sharp (2007:282) notes a fundamental difference between art criticism and urban studies scholarship in terms of how they interpret art in public spaces. She highlights within public and expert discussion of public artworks 'the tendency to concentrate on the works as "art" in the moment of their creation or opening rather than seeing them, more mundanely, as artefacts in the urban landscape'. Her own finding is that public artworks 'gain meaning through use, or just by being there, whether or not this can be articulated (verbally) by those who interact with them'. She notes that most analyses ignore the public's 'unreflective, prediscursive, bodily responses' to public art, which were 'perhaps never anticipated by the architects, artists and designers.' Beyond Lacy's (2008:22) conception of new genre public art as supporting 'multivocal criticism', we are interested in public use as a kind of unconscious criticism or testing of art through action.

USES AND USERS OF ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

This book's focus on the uses of art in public settings contributes to interdisciplinary knowledge about the design of public space, in terms of its meanings and everyday uses for a variety of publics. There is a growing trans-disciplinary literature exploring the rich diversity of informal, unplanned public activities that occur in urban spaces, examining the diversity of actors and their actions, and how these change the meaning, history, function and form of the urban settings that they occupy (Chase et al. 1999; Mitchell 2003; Franck and Stevens 2007; Hou 2010). This work explores the opportunities for use that are presented by particular types of urban sites and specific physical features. Much of this work tends to emphasise users' interventionist roles in physically transforming public spaces to better suit their needs. Our book, by contrast, concentrates on people's behavioural and social responses to urban settings and their artistic contents as they already are. The studies presented here complement a growing body of research into specific individual activities and groups that make use of public spaces in a range of new and unanticipated ways, many of which engage with artworks encountered in those settings. These activities include skateboarding (Borden 2001), parkour (Lamb 2014), cycling (Spinney 2010), yarn-bombing (Moor and Prain 2009), guerrilla gardening (Reynolds 2008), dancing (Chen 2010), and vandalism (Gamboni 2007).

What unites many of the studies mentioned above is that understanding of users and of uses develop oppositionally or dialectically in relation to the intended, programmed 'functions' of public spaces (Stevens 2007; Franck and Stevens 2007). In both theory and practice, the 'use' of objects or environments is often examined in opposition to some other, more