

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE ART AND THE CIVIC EXPERIENCE

By

Kyle Michael Marinshaw

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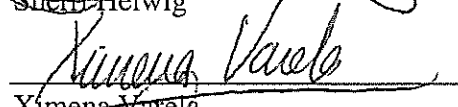
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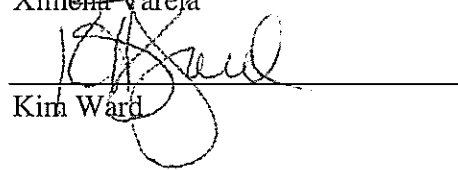
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ABSTRACT

Research will look at public art and its role in fostering a “creative” city ambience. After demonstrating the validity of publicly supported art, the research will identify site-specific performance art as an artistic medium for public engagement. Expanding on the staid tradition of public art as a stationary sculpture, this research will pose the question: can public performance art provide greater instrumentality to publicly supported art? A review of existing sources will provide most of the data; however an in-depth analysis of the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program, produced by the San Francisco Art Commission (SFAC), and their latest project, “Sailing Away” by Zaccho Dance Theatre (ZDT), is central to demonstrating the importance of public site-specific performances. An evaluation of external, critical reviews will provide the basis for this program’s analysis. Interviews with 2 individuals from the SFAC will also provide data.

PREFACE

These moments of heightened reality are seared in the imagination of their spectators and have indelibly marked the places they have touched

—Melanie Kloetzel and Carolyn Pavlik, *Site Dance*

My interest in public performance art was piqued simply enough: on a not-so-particular evening, as I made my way home I came across a street performer who was positioned – strategically of course – near the entrance to the busy U St. Metro Station. Present were the components of every other street performer one might come across in an urban environment: a musical instrument, and an openly splayed case for said musical instrument containing several loose bills and a small pile of coins. Nothing about this performer was strikingly different than any other street performer I had come across, and as such, I did not immediately deduce much resonance from this reasonably normal, everyday encounter. I am not certain of the cause of the following revelation; all I do know was that it was profound. A proverbial “light” turned on, although not in my head but in my ears. The music shocked me from my trance-like urban daze and I was brought back to the experience of active listening and active engagement. Not only did I truly “hear” the music, I also noticed how the music echoed off the buildings, diverting my attention from the music’s genesis to the various sonic interactions between music and the urban environment. My transition from passive city inhabitant to active city participant was swift but lucid; in retrospect, this momentous event was one characterized as an “aha!” moment. Yes, I did become more aware of my environment, but was this the

transcendental moment that would come to define my future existence ... probably not. However, this simple acknowledgement of my urban environment through an artistic mechanism became the precursor that led me to write this thesis and for that, I owe a gracious “thank-you” to this street performer.

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CHAPTER 1

WHY ARE THERE NO PUBLIC *PERFORMANCE*

ART PROGRAMS?

A massive wave of modern architecture swept across the United States after World War II; reaching the architecturally conducive cities first, i.e. New York and Chicago, and then rapidly expanding. With this over mounting force of modernity fueled by industry and development, the modernist architectural style - characterized by its simplification, harsh vertical and horizontal lines and machine aesthetic – swept away the life of a city (Kwon 2002, 64). High-rises seemingly shot up overnight, and in retrospect, replaced ornate architectural renderings with a simplified form. This sterile city- state led to the first public art programs, utilized as a mechanism for structural amelioration and city beautification, “which is to say, public art at this point was conceived as an antidote to modernist architecture and urban design” (Kwon 2002, 64).

Today the urban landscape is no longer defined as a conglomeration of steel and glass; detached, restrictive and devoid of personality. Cities are more conscious of their inhabitants, they are once again a place of human connection and “experience”, and urban cores are rebounding from their declines. However, numerous municipalities continue to struggle with the formidable goal of cultivating citizens who share a sense of civic pride; and while many cities develop creative mechanisms to entice and engage city inhabitants, there is no one-size-fits-all solution; and appropriately so. For the most part,

cities are extremely diverse, complex, and protean composites: the source of countless problems, and conversely, the aforementioned characteristics are also the greatest derivation of a city's appeal and excellence. The key is for a city to create a common language – if such a feat is possible – to try and relay a message that is translatable and open for interpretation but will ultimately lead to the same unifying goal: a connection between the inhabitant and city.

Public art is an approach that connects viewers with the urban landscape, fostering a discourse between participants and the surrounding space. While a multitude of local municipal governments consistently fund and employ public art programs, there is an apparent lack of funding and support for public performance art¹, i.e. live performances of either dance, spoken word, theatre, multi-disciplinary, etc., that is publicly supported or funded by a local municipal art agency. Is the ephemeral nature of live performance a deterrent to allocating public funds as most public art is permanent to semi-permanent (Becker 2004 3; Americans for the Arts 2003, 4)? Site-specific performances, after all, can create a unique, shared experience for the viewer that fosters a public appreciation for an urban environment or recognition of specific location, creating a dialogue between the viewer, the performer and the location involved. If public art was and is the prescribed common language used to combat the inhumanness of a city, why not use art that exudes pure humanness and is solely reliant on the human body for

¹ The phrases “public performance art” and “site-specific performance” are used interchangeably in this paper although their exact meanings differ slightly. This paper will later explore the exact specifics and implications of said phrases, however, it is important to note that “site-specific performance” is the broader genre of art I am referring to, while “public performance art” refers to site-specific performances that are supported and function in the constructs of a municipal or private public art program. These terms will be further explored, however, at the onset of this paper these two phrases are referring to the same general concept.

expression? Granted, all art has a human component in one shape or form, be it through conception, design, construction or production, there is no doubt that art is inextricably linked with the live, human condition. In the book *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces*, Elise Bernhardt refers to these live, human, public performers as “shamans, [who help] us to register beauty and history, using movement to imbue these places with joy, leading us to new realization within the everyday, and bringing us to transcendent moments in our ordinary lives” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009, xxi). It is this moment; this activity; this “heightened sense of reality” (2009, xxi) that creates an experience between the public, the performer, and the site. It is an aim of this paper to explore these experiences, asking the questions: what role can public performance art play in fostering a “creative” city ambience, and can public performance art provide greater instrumentality to public art and further ameliorate the urban landscape by encouraging civic participation, awareness and engagement by the city’s inhabitants?

Similar to all theses, this one started from a simple observation (as mentioned in the preface), slowly growing and taking shape – still not tangible enough to be absolved into electronic or paper format – but remained ethereal, lingering in the fringe.

Vacillating between the exact intent and capacity to which this paper could effectively propose a quantitative and solid claim, it was decided not to focus on the tangible, but rather what is between the tangible; the “inter-tangible” if you will. There are numerous writings that focus on the current push within the U.S. for art organizations to prove their worth through quantitative economic means – most common in the art and economic studies produced by the organization Americans for the Art – even increasingly so in

these times of budget constraints and decreased government funding. Bertie Ferdman's dissertation "Contemporary Site-Specific Theatre in New York City: Performance, the City and Spatial Politics" also utilizes site-specific performance as a means to discuss public experience through an artistic mechanism, however Ferdman does so in the context of "urban planning, real estate values, and gentrification" (2010, iv). Although she does not explicitly draw a correlation between a specific number of performances to a specific increase in real estate value, she does, however, place a strong importance on the financial and economic implications of site-specific performance. While there is no one correct methodology or context to discuss site-specific performance, this paper will attempt to do so by qualitative rather than quantitative means. Qualitative analysis is a reasonable method given the challenges inherent in applying metrics to a moment or an experience. Perhaps these aforementioned intangible items are not even possible to prove? What *is* important to note is the non-quantifiable stance this paper employs. Site-specific performance is a relatively new genre of public art, and as such, this thesis will add to the growing body of literature, furthering the exploration and elucidation of "this utterly transforming genre of performance" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009, xi).

Public. Performance. Art.

Early in the primitive conceptual stages of this thesis, there was perpetual difficulty in condensing the crux of this thesis into a single and easily digestible notion. People would ask the formidable question, "What are you writing about?" My response: a slur of babble and nonsensical remarks, all of which would hint or infer to the intangible concept that was beginning to burgeon. One afternoon I was asked the

formidable question yet again and after fidgeting with several notions I fortuitously provided the illuminating response: “Well, there are numerous public art programs in cities all over the country, why are there are no public *performance* art programs?” Eureka! Yes, further explanation was needed to elucidate the collective intent of this thesis but there was now a simple and comprehensible foundation that could be built upon. Even as the research of this paper progressed, providing moments that would waver between using quantitative or qualitative measures to support this thesis, the direction or intent of this thesis would always return to its foundation: public performance art. Although this simple concept was not an end into itself, it helped provide the process to the end.

The methodology for this paper consists of two major components: a review of existing sources, including books, journal articles, newspapers, etc., and a case study that includes a review of media and press releases, internal documents, and two key interviews. From there, this paper is divided into three major sections of which the linearity and layout is determined by this thesis’ foundation, “public performance art”. The methodology provides a common thread to tie all of the sections together into a coherent and cohesive piece of writing. The first section, the Public, will explore the role of art in the public realm by looking at the concept of public vs. private and the history and evolution of public art, demonstrating the validity of publicly supported art: a fundamental for an experiential and creative city ambiance. The second section, the Performance, will look at site-specific performance art and its role as an emerging public art form. By identifying distinguishing characteristics, site-specific performance art will

be inextricably linked to traditional forms of public art; thus, if public art is a valid form of publicly supported art, so is site-specific performance art. The third section, the Art, will demonstrate theory into practice by exploring the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program (AMSTPP), a program of the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) (the city agency that supports the arts and culture). Included in this case study is a look at the SFAC's latest commission through AMSTPP, "Sailing Away" choreographed by Joanna Haigood and performed by her company, Zaccho Dance Theatre. Included in this section are practical implications that address the question: why are there no public performance art programs?

Public. Performance. Art. Individually these words take on autonomous meanings and interpretations, each one providing its own list of questions, often serving as points of illuminating contention: Who is the "public"? Are these performances site-specific or site-exclusive? What constitutes ephemeral art? Interestingly enough, these individual concepts form a symbiotic relationship when combined, each component adding to the aggregate significance and implications for publicly supported performance art. By first presenting a theoretical framework by which to analyze the subsequent public performance art example, this paper will demonstrate the importance of site-specific performance art and its integral role in creating an experiential, engaging, and reciprocal urban environment.

CHAPTER 2

THE PUBLIC

Marcel Duchamp

All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act

—Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act”

Unconventional, irreverent, nonsensical: French artist Marcel Duchamp was perhaps best known for his edifying role in the Dada movement (Knight 2008, vii). A subsequent reaction to the violence of World War I, Dadaism manifested its hostility to war through the “anti”: anti-establishment, anti-bourgeois, anti-art. By ridiculing and “interrogat[ing] the foundations of society” (vii), Dadaism encouraged its followers to question the norm or the status-quo, transferring agency from institutions to the individuals. These Dada foundations echoed in the writings of Duchamp, fashioning a Dada-esque critique of the relationship between art, artist, and the spectator. In his 1957 seminal lecture, “The Creative Act”, Duchamp questions the role of the artist while placing equal – if not more important – creative power on the spectator (Duchamp 1996, 818-819). Although Duchamp was not the first artist to discuss the concept of allocating consideration to the spectator, his notions did illuminate the relationship between art, artist and spectator. According to Duchamp, the spectator no longer assumes a role of passivity but plays an active role in the realization of the artist’s work. The “art

coefficient” (1957, 819), as Duchamp refers to it, is the missing link between the artist’s intent and his work’s realization; a disconnect between the process and the product (Knight 2008, vii). Without the spectator’s reaction and interaction, the “[artist’s] process is forever unfinished, a still-born idea never seizing its absolute potential” (2008, viii); thus, the spectator is necessary to complete the “creative act.” Duchamp poses an analogy that further elucidates the relationship between artists and spectator; he refers to the artist’s source material as “molasses”: a product in its “raw state” which must be further “refined” by the spectator into “pure sugar” (1957, 819). What can we discern from the writings of Duchamp in the larger context of public performance art? In response to Duchamp, Cher Knight, Assistant Professor of Art History at Emerson College, so aptly concludes that “once art is shared with a larger public, the artist surrenders control to the unpredictable will and whims of ‘the people’” (2008, viii). Duchamp was novel in his notions of transferring interpretive agency and meaning from the hands of the artist into the public, a precursor foreshadowing the edifying and yet complicated role of art in the public realm.

Public Art

Public art can be found in the earliest traces of human activity, even “[before] written language emerged, wall paintings served as a means for people to mark places that provided shelter and sustenance, or were charged with spiritual and mythical meaning” (Arlington Cultural Affairs 2004, 15). From the work of artists in the architectural expressions of the great ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, Rome, etc., the records of their histories inscribed in sculptures, paintings, and monuments, to the

Middle Ages and their great cathedrals and temples embedded with religious ornamentation, public art – in one way or another – has a long standing presence in the history of human expression. Public art is reflexive, providing elucidation to the context in which it was created and displayed, yet also reciprocally, the context's reaction to said piece of public art, i.e. the public's reception (Americans for the Arts 2003,1; Becker 2004; Doss 2006). The following section will explore the role of art in the public realm, beginning with the history of modern public art commissions and exploring the evolution of public art into a more inclusive and experiential mechanism for public expression and engagement. Inherent to this section is the important discussion of what constitutes the public² and to what public does the art serve or communicate? Such questions were famously demonstrated in the public opposition towards the building of the Washington Monument, which took more than 40 years to build due to incessant debates over design and financing (Doss 2006, 1; Savage 1992, 5-32). Public opposition to public art is quite common, and for just reason. Utilizing the Washington Monument, this example of public art was built in the capitol of the United States' and in essence was supposed to represent a defining and unifying symbol of national identity that the cumulative U.S. population could assimilate and appreciate. However, does the United States have a national identity and is a unifying message possible to project and is it even necessary? Perhaps the former notions place too much agency on public art and its role in the city? Is

² Throughout the next section the word *public* will primarily be referenced with quotation marks, signifying a more conceptual representation and interpretation of the word. It is important to note that throughout this paper the word *public* employs numerous roles and interpretations, sometimes even in the same sentence. I will try to be as specific as possible when using said word, however, in an attempt to alleviate confusion I will use quotations when speaking figuratively about the "public". This should hold true for the most part, considering that public art in this paper is primarily referenced as a tangible and concrete conception.

public art purely about aesthetics or is there a larger purpose to its existence and intent, such as fostering cultural democracy, community identity, creative place making, etc.? These questions, among others, will guide the following section, helping to accomplish the primary goal: identifying public art as a valid form of public expression therefore necessitating public support.

The Public Sector, Public Space, and the Public

The public is diverse, variable, volatile, controversial; and it has its origins in the private lives of all citizens. The encounter of public art is ultimately a private experience

—Patricia Phillips, *Critical Issues in Public Art*

The “public” is ambiguous, misconceived, circumferential; a ubiquitously claimed concept in U.S. society that manifests in numerous forms: public restrooms, public knowledge, public sphere, public funding, public relations, public enemy, public library, public space, etc. While the aforementioned compounds are broad relating yet hint at a comprehensive understanding, what really is the “public”? In an effort to fully comprehend the validity of public art, it is important to discuss³ implications of the “public”, first solely as an autonomous idea and then as a modifier of public art. Also inherent to this discussion is the idea of the “private” and its relationship to the “public”; these “correlative and covariant terms” (Hein 2006, 24) provide a binary construct and offer further enlightenment into the often complex symbiotic relationship of these two prevalent ideas. The conversation of public-private will provide the context to better understand public art and its role in both historical and contemporary U.S. societies.

³ I strategically use the word “discuss” instead of “understand” due to the protean nature of the notion of “public”. This idea is location specific and thus should be treated as something that is implied, but not necessarily asserted.

Although there is an historically distinguishable discourse surrounding the notion of “public”, including such influential philosophers as Aristotle, Tocqueville, Dewey, Mills, Habermas, and Kracauer, amongst numerous others, the intent of this section is not to provide an in-depth understanding into this theoretically and philosophically complex idea (Hein 2006, 23-30; Zuidervaat 2011, 91-100). The following will provide a broad understanding of the public, specifically the components that shape the subsequent discussion on public art⁴: the public sector, public space, and the “public”.

Hilde Hein, associate professor of philosophy, first tenured female faculty member at the College of the Holy Cross and writer on the philosophy of museums, including *Public Art*, *The Museum in Transition* and *The Exploratorium*, claims that “Government subsidy, if not actual operation, has come to be the hallmark of what is understood to be public” (2006, 30). Labert Zuidervaat, author of *Art in Public*, concurs that the public sector, in the context of art, is commonly referenced to sponsorship, subsidization, and management from local, regional or national governments, and for good reasoning (2011, 78). In 2004 in the United States, 81% of public art programs were housed in the government; even the 19% of private nonprofit public art programs still received 43% of their funding from government agencies (Becker 2004, 4). In the context of this public definition, the private is any entity that is non-governmental, e.g. nonprofits, private corporations, etc. Utilizing this construct, it is safe to conclude that public art is largely funded by the public, i.e. the government. Although privately supported public art comprises an important sector (as is thoroughly discussed in Chapter

⁴ Please note that all usages of public art are in reference to public art in the U.S. unless otherwise specifically noted.

Four), public art's derivation is largely due in part from state support (as demonstrated in the following history of public art), be it local, regional, or national. Inextricably linked with public or governmental support is the source of means for said support, taxes. Public art that is produced by the government is a causality of service to the public or the tax payers. Thus, with public support comes accountability, the providers of said taxes need to ensure their support is duly utilized; and so, with accountability comes public accessibility and openness.

Hein again contributes to this “public” discussion by commenting that “Some languages speak less ambiguously: ‘public’ means open and accessible, though not always free, while ‘private’ means closed, secret and hidden” (Hein 2006, 30). This dichotomy of public-private (accessible-restricted) gives some indications of the external perceptions and *receptions* towards this binary system in the context of locality. Jane Rendell, author of “Public Art: Between Public and Private” and Director of Architectural Research at Bartlett, UCL, refers to public space - or “non-private space” - as being with others in a social but non-familial setting, also “non-domestic” (2000, 19). Using this framework, places of “consumption” (2000, 19) such as a market or grocery store –although privately owned – are still considered public; “In this sense public space is whatever is not private space (private space being defined as the place of the family)” (2000, 20). While there are numerous interpretations of what constitutes public space, the simplicity of this former explication is more commodious due to the comprehensiveness it allocates to the public: the private is limited to the home thus allowing a vast range of space that is openly accessible. While this last notion is perhaps slightly over zealous and

wishful, in the context of public art it is fairly accurate. Generally speaking, most public art projects are presented in public spaces, that is, spaces that are readily open and accessible, regardless if said space is government or privately owned (referring to private in this context as non-government and non-domestic).

The largest and perhaps most complex definition of the “public” are its numerous and diverse components, i.e. the people, tax payers, populations, citizens, etc. No matter which identifier one chooses to employ, there is still a lack-of-a-better word to fully encapsulate the protean and identifiable notion of “the public”. The fundamental problem with this notion is that inherently, it does not exist. Hein remarks that “[the ‘public’] is a fiction that has survived through centuries of redefinition” (2006, 42). Michael Warner, social theorist and professor of English Literature and American Studies at Yale University, contends that “No one really inhabits the general public. This is true not only because it is by definition general but also because everyone brings to such a category the particularities from which she has to abstract herself in consuming this discourse” (Warner 2002, 182). Warner’s comments crystallize perhaps the biggest folly with the idea of a “public”: the presumption that said “public” is already collectively formed and identifiable. Much like the idea of “community” the notion of “public” is paradoxical in nature; in an effort to conceptualize such a complex notion, the use of a single word minimizes and homogenizes the expansive nature that a “public” - or a “community”, or a “people” - necessitates. In *Public Art*, Cher Knight affirms this observation by utilizing John Dewey’s *In The Public and Its Problems*, “noting that the ‘public’ always changes with time and place, and suggesting that such a public is ‘too diffused and scattered and

too intricate in composition’ to be treated as a holistic entity” (Knight 2010, xi; Dewey 1927, 33-37). In that light, perhaps it is futile to even try and allocate understanding to this concept? However, the salient notion to ascertain is the disassociation of the “public” with singularity and homogeneity; the idea of one constant “public” does not exist. In the context of public art, this formidable notion of a “public” – in regards to people – is continually explored throughout this paper. While the former discussion of the “public” perhaps raised more questions than it answered, it is important to note the elasticity in this argument and the multiplicity of elucidations. The treatment of the “public” is further explored and interwoven in the following history of public art in the United States and will demonstrate the changing role of the “public” in the evolution of public art.

A Brief History of Public Art in the U.S.

Temporary or permanent, abstract or literal, functional or aesthetic, public art is a “multifaceted field of inquiry [that] encompasses a wide variety of creative expressions in the public realm. From memorials and historical monuments to contemporary installations and performance events, the possibilities are endless,” (2004, 1) claims Jack Becker, founder and artistic director of FORECAST Public Artworks and author of “Public Art: An Essential Component of Creative Communities.” While there is an expansive body of literature that discusses this diverse field of artistic and public expression, there is still no consensus on what exactly constitutes public art, largely due in part to its ever expanding role in the public and its various manifestations. The following will not only show the history of public art in the U.S., but the evolution from its more traditional origins of permanency to its more abstractness and temporariness.

Also included in the following is a demonstration of how the notion of “public” in relation to public art has progressed over the years, and as such, the subsequent history is explored in the context of “public” support (government support) as opposed to private support; not necessarily allocating priority to art that is created under government auspices, however the limitation of scope is necessary to the refinement of this thesis.

From the New Deal to New genre

The first examples of public art were conceived and created for large audiences and helped “to garner... attention; ... provide an edifying, commemorative, or entertaining experience; and convey messages through generally comprehensible content” (Hein 2008, 1). In this former context, grand objects such as the Bamiyan Buddhas of central Afghanistan to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris are representative of these former impetuses (Hein 2006, 51; Knight 2, 2010). Although these examples are commonly referenced as monuments and not public art, they were produced under similar parameters: created under state support (public or government support), displayed in public settings and intended for reception by large and diverse audiences⁵. Although “[U.S.] pragmatism tends to resist state patronage for the arts,” (Knight 2010, 3) the first official public art program was demonstrated in Roosevelt’s New Deal. While the main thrust was to tackle unemployment and basic social services, the New Deal also “positioned the federal government as a primary agent of social change and enlightenment” (Knight 2010, 3). Under the auspices of the U.S. federal government,

⁵ While the discussion of monument and memorial as public art is an important one, it is not applicable to this paper. For additional reading on the topic, please see *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism* by Cher Krause Knight, Chapter 2: “Art as Monument, Art as Memorial”.

from 1933 to 1943 thousands of artists created more than one hundred thousand works of art (Knight 2010, 3). Although the stimulus for this encouragement of artistic creation was primarily intended to lessen the impact of the terrible economy, it resulted in the first official example of public support for public art in the U.S. on a grand scale.

The following sections will discuss the approximately “35-year history of the modern public art movement in the [U.S.]” (Kwon 2002, 60), demonstrated in three distinct paradigms: the art-in-public-places model, the art-as-public-spaces approach, and the art-in-public-interest model or “new genre public art” (Kwon 2002, 60; Lacy 1995, 20-25). Partially dictated by public support (governmental) and public reaction (the people), the evolution of public art is a curious and yet accurate barometer to the U.S. sociological sentiment toward art, further illustrating this inextricable relationship between the public and art.

Art-in-public-places

The appearance of art-in-public-places coincided with the inception of several support programs from the government: the Art-in-Architecture Program of the General Services Administration (GSA) in 1963, the Art in Public Places Program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1967, and various local percent-for-art programs and strategies (Kwon 2002, 57; Knight 2010, 6-21). First employed in Philadelphia in 1959, percent-for-art programs utilize a small portion of capital improvement funds and allocate said funds to either the commissioning of new artworks or to acquisition of already completed ones (Becker 2004, 4). The art-in-public-places model was dominated by “modernist abstract sculptures that were often enlarged replicas of works normally found

in museums and galleries” (Kwon 2002, 60-61); best exemplified by Alexander Calder’s, *La Grande Vitesse*, located in Grand Rapids, Michigan and installed in 1969 (Kwon 2002, 60-61). *La Grande Vitesse* was the first commission from the NEA’s Art in Public Places Program. Although the official goal of this program was to: “[increase] awareness of contemporary art... [and foster] aesthetic enhancement and socially-minded redevelopment of public spaces” (Knight 2010, 15), this genre of public art was largely criticized for its lack of connection to, and integration of, its locality. Miwon Kwon, art historian and author of *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, illustrates this critique by commenting that these “sculptures were conceived as autonomous works of art whose relationship to the site was at best incidental” (2002, 63), thus furthering the separation between the public and the art (Kwon 2002, 63). Described as “plop art”⁶ this genre of public art raised the formidable question: is there a difference between public art and art in a public place (Knight 2010, 8)? The only quality to warrant the title “public” for art-in-public-places was their outdoor locations that strived to imbue a sense of openness and accessibility: “parks, university campuses, civic centers, entrance areas to federal buildings, plazas of city streets, parking lots, airports” (Kwon 2002, 60). Regardless of the “unrestricted physical access” (Kwon 2002, 65) to these public art works, the detachment from their environments and showcased display rendered them “more like extensions of the museum... rather than making any genuine gestures toward public engagement” (Kwon 2002, 65).

⁶ This term is commonly attributed to James Wines, architect with SITE, who is also known to have referred to the art-in-public places genre as “turds on the plaza” (Knight 2008, 8; Kwon 2002, 182).

In spite of all the incessant and abundant criticisms towards the art-in-public-places mode, there were still numerous positives derived from this primitive genre of publicly supported public art. While these large sculptures did not readily engage the public, they did provide access to artworks from some of the preeminent artists of this time period, including Isamu Noguchi, Henry Moore, and Alexander Calder (Kwon 2002, 60). In the case of *La Grande Vitesse*, while the residents of Grand Rapids initially “decried” the sculpture, it eventually “ushered in a wave of art enthusiasm” (Knight 2010, 17) and became a point of civic pride. Art-in-public-places was an important first initiative to develop a platform for public art funding and implementation, however, it was the lack of both site integration and site-specificity that lead the NEA to modify its guidelines in 1974, stipulating that all public art works need to be “appropriate to the immediate site” (Kwon 2002, 65), thus paving the way for the art-as-public-spaces approach.

Art-as-Public-Spaces

By 1978, the NEA was encouraging “applicants ‘to approach creatively the wide range of possibilities for art in public situations’”, recommending artists to go beyond the “monumental steel object-off-the-pedestal” (Lacy 1995, 23) and approach public art in a more practical and functional manner. Ushered in with this new attitude towards public art was a push for site-specificity, that is, the site was no longer a backdrop but a blank canvas which artists were encouraged to fully integrate and utilize. Through these new stipulations of architectural integration, “the NEA endorsed a ‘wide range of possibilities for art in public situations’ [that is] ‘any permanent media, including earthworks,

environmental art, and non-traditional media, such as artificial lighting” (Kwon 2002, 67). These new guidelines, implemented not only by the NEA, but also by the GSA and other public art agencies, promoted public art to not only *adapt* to the evolving contemporary art sensibilities, but to more closely *resemble* “architecture and environmental design” (Kwon 2002, 67). Public art was now being measured by its utility, i.e. its “use value over its aesthetic value” (Kwon 2002, 69), and by doing so, the public art landscape became inundated with “benches and tables, street lamps, manhole covers, fencing... gateways, columns, floors, walls, stairways, bridges, urban plazas, lobbies, [and] parks” (Kwon 2002, 69); this genre of public art was often referred to as art-as-public-spaces by Kwon and Lacey and “Art as Amenity” and “Art in the Park, Art as the Park” by Knight (Kwon 2002, 69; Lacy 1995; Knight 2010, 28-36)

As the public art in the 1970s and early 1980s perpetually “disappeared into the site” (Kwon 2002, 69), both artists and critics, e.g. Suzanne Lacy, Mary Jane Jacob, Richard Serra, Arlene Rave, etc., began to question the merits of site-specificity vs. human engagement and the “public good.” Inherent to this problem was the disparity in values and ideas of public art, more specifically between the agencies commissioning the public art, the artists creating the public art, and the community or publics that would engage with the public art. These concerns were further exacerbated and finally peaked with the installation of Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc*, commissioned by the GSA and installed in Federal Plaza in 1981 (Kwon 2002, 57; Lacy 1995, 24). Just eight years later, after five years of public hearings and lawsuits, the “73-ton, 12-foot-high, 120-foot-long curved expanse of Cor-Ten steel” was removed (Knight 2010, 8). *Tilted Arc*, which

garnered national attention due to its controversy, was the anti-thesis to art-as-public-places model. Bisecting Federal Plaza in the form of a massive wall, Serra's *Tilted Arc* was intended to be "non-utilitarian, non-functional" (Serra 2010, 72) although according to Serra, his work was planned specifically for Federal Plaza. However, *Tilted Arc* proved to be "more concerned with physical rather than social context" (Knight 2008, 9) as the large "iron curtain" (2008, 9) bisected the openness of the plaza and diverted the traffic patterns of pedestrians. The removal of *Tilted Arc* represented a movement for greater "public accountability" (Lacy 1995, 24) by the artists and producing agencies. Jeff Kelly comments in *New Genre Public Art: Mapping the Terrain* that "[what] too many artists did was to parachute into a place and displace it with art" (1995, 24). Although many of these displacements were seamlessly assimilated into the urban landscape, i.e. park benches, urban plazas, etc., this former notion predicates the lack of correspondence between the public and the public art; a marginalization of "audience, relationship[s], [and] communication" (Lacy 1995, 28). The public had little voice in the decision as to what type of art was installed in their communities, necessitating a need for greater dialogue between the public, the artist and commissioning agency.

Art-in-Public-Interest Model or "New Genre Public Art"

The evolution of public art, although affected by its intrinsic relationship with the "public" (government, space and people), has also largely been influenced by the overall artistic landscape. It is sometimes easy to forget that public art is still a form of artistic expression that takes its cues not solely from the public but also the political climate,

social inequalities, censorship, as well as health and environmental changes (Lacy 1995, 28-29). By the late 1980s and following the *Tilted Arc* controversy, “public art practitioners and administrators engaged in considerable soul-searching...reexamining the fundamental questions of public art’s goals and procedures” (Kwon 2002, 80). Inherent to this soul searching was the subsequent increase in community involvement, including public art selection panels that were comprised of community members who represented both artistic and non-artistic sectors. Allocating additional agency to the community, artists began to conceptualize their works with the possibilities of “community participation, even collaboration, in the making of [their] art work” (Kwon 2002, 82). Dubbed “new genre public art”, the term was first coined by Suzanne Lacy, editor of *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* and an internationally known conceptually performance artists, and became widely adopted by the academic public art community soon thereafter (Lacy 1995; Hein 2006, 75). New genre public art, also referred to as art-in-public-interest, redefined the notion of the “public” and its implications for public art (Kwon 2002, 60). Patricia Phillips, public art critic and theorist, remarks that in relation to public art “the public dimension is a physiological, rather than a physical or environmental construct” (1988, 93). Framing Phillips’ comment to the three different styles of public art, the latter idea – the physical – references both the art-in-public-places and art-as-public-spaces whereas the former – the physiological – correlates to the ideas of new genre public art (Hein 2006, 89). This notion of “art for the people”, a foundation of new genre public art, was an effort to combine – perhaps not consciously – the two earlier forms of public art – pure aesthetics with pure functionality

– while recognizing the importance of the public dimension, i.e. both the hearts and minds of the people. Striving to engage the two former fundamental cores while “[risking] some discontent along the way” (Knight 2010, 20), new genre public art correlates a reciprocal relationship between the artist, the art, and the public.

Suzanne Lacy writes that “one of the distinguishing characteristics of [new genre public art] is the factoring of the audience into the actual construction of the work. This work activates the viewer – creating a participant, even a collaborator” (1995, 37). Harking back to the first discussion in this chapter on Dada artist, Marcel Duchamp, and his writings on the “creative act”, new genre public art, conceptually speaking, is in accordance with Duchamp’s ideas that the audience, or the public, has agency in determining the engagement and outcome of the artwork in question. One such example of new genre public art that translates these ideas into practice was *Full Circle*, a project that occurred in multiple sites throughout the Loop in downtown Chicago in 1993 (Kwon 2002, 100). Conceived by Suzanne Lacy as part of the temporary exhibitions program, “Culture in Action: New Public Art in Chicago”, *Full Circle* placed 100 large limestone boulders in public locations such as street corners, plazas, sidewalks, etc. (Jacob and Brenson and Olson 1995, 64). These boulders - spontaneously appearing overnight - brought a sense of unusual to the everyday ordinary; enticing the public to explore and interrogate these out-of-place yet nondescript objects. Appearing on all 100 of the boulders was a memorial plaque that recognized a different woman from Chicago (Kwon 2002, 100). The 100 names were chosen from a community comprised steering committee that played an integral and collaborative role from creation to fruition of *Full*

Circle. Although Lacy's intention for this installation was open accessibility, translating into a simplicity and a complete purification of any esoteric elements that could potentially render it "less readable [to] a mass audience" (Jacob and Brenson and Olson 1995, 64), her work still necessitated the sort of public engagement and interaction characteristic of new genre public art.

While new genre public art was lauded as a new perspective in which to create and integrate public art with multiple local elements: environmental, historical, contextual, physiological, cultural, etc., similar to the previous models of public art, it too, was met with criticism. Perhaps the most prominent critique of new genre public art was the perpetual questioning of the aesthetic validity. Hein comments that, "obsessively ordinary, [new genre public art] may be vulgar, irreverent, and even repulsive. It is suspicious of beauty as aesthetic affectation, a false friend, culturally relative, and maybe a distraction" (2006, 89). Now, while it is questionable whether or not this former comment was a critical denouncement but more of a critical observation, it still is representative of numerous sentiments toward new genre public art. One major component to these claims is the disintegration of the traditional constructs of what constitute public art ... or art for that matter. This questioning of aesthetic quality and artistic validity was not localized to public art but to post modernism and contemporary art in general. Take graffiti for example: initially treated as "unlawful acts of vandalism, [graffiti artists and their work] were magically transformed by aesthetic fiat into art" (Hein 2006, 88). This democratization of art meant that anyone could be an artist, non-traditional modes of media were increasingly used, and the artwork itself could "be the

relationship between and among artists and publics – a process, not a thing” (Hein 2006, 74). Hein responds to this perpetual blurring of the lines by saying that “the basic polarities that ground traditional thinking about all art – subject/object, artist/audience, art/non-art – have become fluid” (2006, 77). This concept presents a problem with new genre public art as well as all public art, due in part to the aesthetic ambiguity: if said public art is not perceived *as* art, then why should the public support it?

The Case for Public Support

Currently public art professes neither to command nor to seek unanimity but to interrogate and make room for doubt. In a world that hungers for answers and clings to certainty, this can be an unpopular ambition
 —Hilde Hein, *Public Art: Thinking Museums Differently*

Prior to discussing and validating support for public art, it is useful to recapitulate the salient points from this past chapter. Beginning with the cohesiveness of public art, it is largely affected by the various discernments of the “public”: the public sector or the government; public physical space which is openly accessible; and the “public”, an expansive and paradoxical concept. However, most important to the former is the “public’s” pivotal role in the evolution of public art and its three main historical genres: art-in-public-places, art-as-public-spaces, and art-in-public-interest or new genre public art.

In *Public Art: An Essential Component of Creating Communities*, Jack Becker discusses the importance of public art, but provides the following caveat: implications of public art’s validity and importance are community specific, making it difficult to propose comprehensive claims of public art and its importance (2004, 1). Furthermore,

Tim Hall and Iain Robertson purport that “there is no adequate critical paradigm in public art research through which to satisfactorily evaluate the claim of public art” (2001, 18), eluding to the question: what is the point of discussing the importance of public art if there is no validity behind the discussion? A valid point, considering the “supposed contribution[s]” (2001, 18), as Hall and Robertson would comment, of public art are generally qualitative and intangible. However, much like new genre public art, the importance lies in the process; and perhaps the very nature of public art renders it unquantifiable? Regardless, the following discussion of what public art can provide to a city or a community is an important one, and will draw from various contending sources. While all sources are genuinely supportive of public art, some are absolutely supportive while others, albeit still supportive, are more dubious of the exact implications of public art and the effects it can have on a community.

Although many of the benefits associated with public art were already mentioned, albeit implicitly, i.e. beautification, functionality, engagement, civic pride, etc., the majority of literature breaks the claims of public art into the following categories: engagement of community, economic benefits, civic identity and pride, and education and appreciation of art (Becker 2004, 6; Hall and Robertson 2001, 10-17). While each of the former claims are diverse and autonomous in their own right, it is interesting that apart from economic benefits – which could be argued for – all of the claims are inherent to the new genre public art paradigm. However, despite the benefits allotted to new genre public art, the other models of public art are still effective and important in their own right and will play a role in the following discussion. As such, each model of public art:

art-in-public places, art-as-public places, and new genre public art, will provide the structure for the following analysis, as each category provides its own unique sets of benefits.

Art-in-public-places, although often criticized for not integrating into and engaging its surrounding environment, was and continues to be successful in providing a conduit to “disseminate the experience and enjoyment of the arts beyond the museum to the widest possible audience” (Hein 2006, 74). This important edifying tool was crucial in providing art to those that could otherwise not experience it. Regardless of this model’s treatment of the “public” as a stagnant conceptualization, art-in-public-places demonstrates that public art is capable of educating through means of mass communication: the dissemination of a broad message to a broad audience. Furthermore, this genre ushered in large-scale public sculptures that have become hallmarks of a city’s identity. *La Grande Vitesse*, the NEA’s first commission through its Art in Public Places Program, has become a civic logo for Grand Rapids and appears on “everything from the city’s letterhead to its garbage trucks” (Knight 2010, 17). In Chicago, the large 1967 cubist public art sculpture by Pablo Picasso is a well-known landmark that adorns the modern Daley Plaza in the Downtown Loop. Although initially met with controversy, today the sculpture and its surrounding plaza have become a hub for congregation, festivals and musical concerts.

Apart from a continuation of the same enriching components, art-as-public-spaces allocates increased attention to the public space. Largely due in part to stipulations from the earlier government agencies that supported these projects, however this new paradigm

imbued public art with a sense of place specificity, helping to “strengthen links between communities and place” (Hall and Roberts 2001, 12). In “Public Art and Urban Regeneration: advocacy, claims and critical debate”, John Dungey comments that “we...believe that our relationships with places are as important as our relationship with people...in turn, [we] want to nurture places and do all we can to ensure that what we value is not destroyed” (1990, 9). Art-as-public-spaces also addresses a community’s needs, producing functional and utilitarian works, such as park benches, bus stops, bridges, manhole covers, parks, urban squares, etc. By provided a defined purpose and creating a sense of space, this genre is able to enhance civic identity by creating art that is unique to the respective city or community (Hall and Robertson 2001, 14). Although civic identity “is a widely deployed rhetoric in public arts advocacy” (Hall and Roberston 2001, 14) it is an important one because it has direct correlations to public or government support. Public art, in this sense, makes its case for support by enhancing the public’s connection with their respective city, thus producing a body of invested citizens.

New genre public art – most importantly – allocates focus on the social; the physiological; the human capital; the people, as its impetus and primary concern. Commensurate to the artistic evolution of other movements, i.e. modernism, post-modernism, etc., new genre public art was a *reaction* to its predecessors but also to its socio-political environment. Integrating public inclusion, engagement, and participation from inception to completion, new genre public art was sensitive to not only the environmental context but also the human context. In addition to “[adding] beauty to our shared environment” (Becker 2004, 9) as well as celebrating and commemorating a

particular theme, new genre public art has the ability to create and define its own public, a feat that the other two models of public art struggled to do. Due to the environmental and community specificity, new genre public is capable of providing an intentional message that not only aims to include the public at large but also the public that aided in the creation of that particular public artwork. This ability to interact and communicate through numerous channels across numerous platforms is what lends new genre public art the ability to foster increased community engagement, a sense of civic identity and pride as well as to educate the public, not only about art, but about the community that aided in the creation process.

Looking Ahead

In the U.S., although we all have the right to experience art, it certainly does not imply that everyone *does* experience art. Ben Cameron, Arts Program Director at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation in New York, in his popular lecture “The True Power of the Performing Arts” he comments on the “seismic fundamental realignment of culture and communications” (Cameron 2010) that is ongoing in the U.S. as a result of the internet and the subsequently spawned ethos of “anything we want... whenever we want it” (2010). Although Cameron frames his ideas in the context of the performing arts and subsequent decline in patrons, the detrimental outcomes he discusses resulting in the aforementioned ethos provides an illuminating realization of public art: it is already ahead of the game. For example, new genre public art largely incorporates mixed media that can include new forms of technology and/or communication. However, drawing from the main points of the previous chapter, it is the foundational concepts of public art

that allows it more capable to deal with the onset of imposing technology, the subsequent decline of arts participation and the methods by which patrons engage and interact with art. Most appropriately, the open accessibility of public art provides a unique experience to its audience, one that circumvents the traditional relationship of audience and art; a central construct that Cameron attributes to the aging infrastructure for performing arts participation, an issue that also plagues museums (Hein 2006). One of the fundamental concerns Cameron ascribes the performing arts as unable to deal with this new technological ethos is their aging infrastructure, i.e. the “large facilities that ossify the ideal relationship between artist and audience most appropriate to the 19th century” (Cameron 2010). Conversely, public art is predicated on the establishment that already aims to remove or amend this restrictive relationship between art and viewer by providing open accessibility.

Public art, unlike the performing arts, is not bound by a curtain call. This highlights a crucial component of public art that is not always recognized: it is free, openly accessible, and only operates (viewed) by the determination of the viewer. In the video *Culture Wire* produced by the San Francisco Arts Commission, Jill Manton, Director of Programs, comments on the omnipresent and accessibility of public art, that “from A to Z, from the airport to the zoo, you will find the mark of the Arts Commission [public art] ... in addition, it really conveys an important message that providing public art, free accessible public art 24/7, is an essential City service” (Manton 2009). Although public art is openly accessible and unrestrained in regards to audience participation, the mechanisms and processes involved in their commissions and productions are still

established inflexible constructs; thus, if there is one thing public art should take away from Cameron's speech, it is the notion of adaptability and nimbleness he prescribes to the performing arts. Framing this argument in the context of public art: according to Jack Becker, in 2004 one half of the U.S's completed public art projects were permanent, demonstrating that a large amount of public art projects are bound constants, unable to adapt and shift with the changing physical and social climate (2004, 3). Although a notable benefit of public art is the ability for repeat viewings, the social relevance of these works is quickly lost in their ever-changing environments. Perhaps the staid notion of public art permanency is in need of a "cultural reformation" (Cameron 2010)?

CHAPTER 3

THE PERFORMANCE

What still excites me about site-specific work is its sense of adventure. Through site work, a collection of performers and audience members can share a space animated by the unique energy of live performance. Once a space is energized, it is never the same again. Site work offers a fresh look at what we take for granted; it reopens the curiosity that is an inherent, fundamental quality of our humanity. Honoring place is a way of grounding us, a way to remain alert to and appreciate the magic of what is.

—Meredith Monk, “Meredith Monk as Site Pioneer, 1969-71”

Site-specific Dance

The history of dance is long and involved and permeates numerous cultures as a conduit for aesthetical, social, and religious engagements. Interestingly enough, while dance was and remains a form of pure physical expression, it was not until the 17th century that dance (in the form of ballet) was presented in a concert setting. This formalized presentation, ascribed to the lavish Italian courts in which ballet was created, provided dance with an aesthetical focus and intent, thus elevating this once humble form of communal expression to an esoteric art form. In accordance with this elevation, the conceptualization of dance, that is the query into what exactly constitutes “dance”, was perpetually marked with uncertainty through the following dichotomies: formality vs. tradition, art vs. pedestrian, audience vs. performer. Today, dance takes numerous forms: from classical ballet to the popular United States television show *Dancing with the Stars*; from traditional Indian dance Bharata Natyam to the hip-hop-street-inspired break

dancing; and from Broadway's musical theatre to informal and impromptu flash mobs. The following chapter will focus on the genre of site-specific dance⁷, which herein after will be referenced as site-specific *performance*, a broader label that will do better to encompass the myriad interpretations and manifestations of this genre. Beginning with Allan Kaprow, founder of the Happenings and originator of site-specific theatre, this chapter will explore the history of site-specific performance from its origins to contemporary forms, culminating in a working definition – or general understanding – of this genre (Ferdman 2010, 38). Drawing from existing literature as well as the choreographies, performances, and writings of numerous site-specific performance artists, this chapter will present a foundation for an informed discussion about the field of site-specific performance while demonstrating the inextricable relationship between public art and site-specific performance.

Allan Kaprow

Happenings are events that, put simply, happen... They exist for a single performance, or only a few, and are gone forever as new ones take their place

—Allan Kaprow, “The Happenings”

Theorist, experimentalist, artist: Allan Kaprow was the fundamental figure and creator of Happenings, an artistic movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s that was characterized by an emphasis on process over product; predicated on the notion to “overturn standard theatrical practices” (Henri 1974, 90) (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 12). Although Happenings were characterized by a live “performance component” (Ferdman

⁷ Herein after, site-specific dance will be referenced as site-specific performance. The latter term is more inclusive of a broad genre that not only includes dance, but theatre, circus-like movements, etc.

2010, 37), Kaprow began his artistic career as a painter. Kaprow was highly influenced by Jackson Pollock, inspiring him to write, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock”, where he details several “new values” (2003, 2) introduced by Pollock, in particular was the “act of painting” (2) where the “process of painting [becomes] part of the painting itself” (2) (Ferdman 2010, 36). With this emphasis on the process, the connection “between art and its medium” (Ferdman 2010, 36) became less of a significant component for Kaprow as he saw greater importance on the space between; “the visual-art answer to making a painting in space” (36). This reconceptualization of space allowed Kaprow to integrate the exploration of time, location, and engagement into his art, leading to the premiere of *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* in 1959 in New York City (37). A notable element of this aforementioned performance, as well as the over-all genre of Happenings, was the location of the performance and the direct effect it had on the engagement between the audience and the performers. As Kaprow notes, “There is ... no separation of audience and play [in Happenings] (as there is even in round or pit theatres” (2003, 17). *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* took place in three distinct rooms, with specific instructions given to the audience detailing when and where they should relocate to or physically interact with the performance (Henri 1974, 91). Although Kaprow was one of many artists of the 1960s to rebel “against conventional creative processes” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 7-8), he was notable for “[bringing] people – whether artists or passerby – into active relation with objects and sites and left it up to them to create their own art” (7-8). Kaprow, along with other Happenings’ artists, were instrumental in “destabili[zing] the line between art and everyday activities,” (9) a precursor to the democratization of performance; a

repositioning to non-traditional performance settings; and the recontextualization of movement in space.

A Brief History of Site-Specific Performance

Cunningham and Cage

At the convergence of Happenings, minimalist visual art, and modern dance, the “elemental stew for site-specific dance” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 8) was fashioned. In the context of modern dance, choreographers Merce Cunningham and Anna Halprin were quite influential in cultivating this burgeoning medium (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 8). Starting with Cunningham, the initial reaction to his choreographic work on the New York dance scene in the early 1960s was “shock” (McDonagh 1970, 33). His choreography reconfigured audience assumptions and expectations of what constitutes dance; espousing the notion that dance – namely popularized dance in the U.S. – can denote more than the codified systems of ballet and modern dance⁸. While both Cunningham and Allan Kaprow were instrumental in the reconceptualization of their respective genres of artistic expression, it is important to note a common inspiration for both artists: John Cage, the composer and founder of the idea of “chance method” (Kaye 1994, 93). Often coinciding with the throwing of a dice or the flipping of a coin, Cage’s views on dance creation reallocated creative agency from the process of the artist and into the chaotic hands of chance. Not only did Cage influence the earlier Happenings of Allan

⁸ Although this claim is directed towards Merce Cunningham, the same could be said for many of the postmodern choreographers of New York City. While Cunningham was often depicted as a progenitor of this genre of “choreographic upheaval”, i.e. a focus on improvisation, nontraditional performance spaces, and pedestrian movements, this movement was also largely associated with Judson Dance Theatre of New York City (Mazo 1977, 13-16) (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9).

Kaprow, but his unsystemitized process also affected Cunningham's discernment of dance, from conception to performance (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9). Through the influence of "chance dance" (9), Cunningham started performing in "unusual settings: cafeterias, museums, plazas, and gymnasiums," (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9) imparting the understanding that "venerated dance vocabulary, choreographic procedures, and traditional venues [were] limiting" (9); an important foundational concept to the future evolution, growth and maturation of site-specific performance (9).

Anna Halprin

Another "key figure" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9) in the origins of site-specific performance was Anna Halprin, founder of the Dancers' Workshop Company in 1955, located just north of San Francisco (Goldberg 1988, 139). Although Halprin emphasized outdoor settings in her movement "exercises" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9), perhaps her most prominent contribution was her influence on and tutelage of numerous choreographers and dancers, such as Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Meredith Monk and Steve Paxton, who would later become pioneers in the field of site-specific performance (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9; Goldberg 1988, 139). Conducting classes outdoors, Halprin had her students try to free their bodies from the prescribed and systematized restrictions "of older dance vocabularies" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9). In an attempt to clean the slate, i.e. "[clearing] her students' bodies of movement habits and preferences" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 9), Halprin's efforts were marked by her students' amplified awareness of both their internal and external environments (9). From these exercises two important outcomes were achieved: one, the dancers learned to react

and adapt to their physical environments and two, the dancers began utilizing more pedestrian type movements, i.e. “everyday activities such as walking, eating, bathing and touching” (Goldberg 1988, 139), a movement genre largely associated with post-modern dance (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 10). “[Halprin’s] ideals and the counterculture atmosphere” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 10) she helped cultivate imparted a profound reaction on her students, providing the “fundamentals of what would [later] become known as site-specific dance” (10).

Judson Dance Theatre and Beyond

Upon arriving in New York City in 1960, the students of the Dancers’ Workshop Company began to “[translate] Halprin’s obsession for an individual’s sense of the straightforward physical movement...into public performances” (Goldberg 1988, 139) presented at the Reuben Gallery and the Judson Church. Under the guidance of Robert Dunn, a collaborator and colleague of both Cunningham and Cage, the post-modern Judson Dance Group formed. Imbued with “hit the ground running” vigor, the collective of dancers immediately began creating integrated and multifaceted performances, including the choreographies of Lucinda Childs, Trisha Brown, Sally Gross, and Philip Corner, among others (Goldberg 1988, 141). While several members of the Judson Dance Group embraced outdoor settings, according to Melanie Kloetzel and Carolyn Pavlik, co-editors of the book *Site Dance*, choreographer Lucinda Childs, in retrospect, may have created the “first truly site-specific dance” (2010, 12), *Street Dance* in 1964. Performed on a strip of Broadway Street in New York City, both Childs and one other performer dressed themselves in black raincoats and interacted with the physical space “as well as

integrating seamlessly with the bustle of the street” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 12). The arranged spectators were situated in windows above and across the street, and were accompanied by a recording of Childs’ voice that provided exact details of the site’s physical features, the same features that Childs and partner were concurrently highlighting on the street below (12). In *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s*, Steve Paxton recounts the experience of Childs’ *Street Dance* by remarking that, “By chance another man in a black raincoat walked by, and he stopped for a moment at the window. In that moment when I wondered if she had arranged this or not, my world was illuminated. Nothing changed, except my attitude. People on the street continue to walk. But now, I doubted them. Were they ‘real’? Of course they were?!...A distant siren went ooooh. The whole city joined the duet Childs made” (2009, 12).

Trisha Brown and Meredith Monk

The early works of Judson Dance Theatre were the precursors to the site-specific performance genre, which at that time, had yet to be fully explored. Trisha Brown and Meredith Monk helped solidify site-specific performance as a recognizable form of artistic expression and are “[often] considered the founders of the genre” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 13). Influenced by the earlier works of Childs, Forti and Paxton, Trisha Brown was encouraged by the challenge to occupy and utilize a multitude of vacant spaces. “I have in the past felt sorry for ceilings and walls. It’s perfectly good space, why doesn’t anyone use it?” (Brown 2009, 13) comments Brown, professing a sentiment that alluded to the inspiration of many of her later seminal works, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) and *Roof Piece* (1971) (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 13).

Although the movement vocabularies for both pieces were fairly common to the post-modern dance genre, the salient features of both pieces was the impetus that Brown employed, “[using] the present structure and details of a site to inspire her pieces” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 13). In regards to this creation inspiration, Brown comments that “I’m not interested in taking a work which was made in a studio and performed in an interior space and placing it outside” (Brown 2009, 13). This sentiment was employed in her piece, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, which was just that: a harnessed dancer walking down the side of a building. Although this piece was adapted to several sites different from that of its original location, each performance presented its own set of inspirations and challenges and thus affected the final outcomes (Kloetzel and Pavlik, 2010, 13). Brown’s other notable site-specific work, *Roof Piece*, was a confluence of 12 dancers spread out over eight New York building rooftops that covered 10 city blocks (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 13). In a narrative that resembled the popular children’s game “Telephone” the dancers would “pass” gestures from one building to another, each time adapting and interpreting the received gesture so that the newly passed gesture would differ slightly from the original. In both the aforementioned works, Brown’s treatment of a space as *the* inspirational factor was an important and influential concept that later became the cornerstone of site-specific performance.

Similar to Trisha Brown, Meredith Monk was also a prominent figure in the development of site-specific performance, involved not only in the primitive years of the genre, she continues to choreograph performances in non-traditional venues, whereas several of the other early site-specific choreographers went on to have successful careers

in concert performances. Although Monk utilized a site much like Brown, she was also influenced by a “site’s present structure and function” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 13) and expanded on this mode of creation by delving deeper into the non-physical attributes of a site, namely the historical particulars (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 13). Also notable to Monk’s work was her implementation of a “tour”: the reconfiguring of the audience to relocate around the performers to gain various viewpoints of the performance. While Allan Kaprow’s *Happenings* demonstrated the precursors to this use of audience perspective, Monk further expanded on this notion to create a narrative-like story telling experience for the audience. These methods and features of site-specific dance were present in her early works, such as *Blueprint* (1967), *Tour: Dedicated to Dinosaurs* (1969), and *Juice* (1969) as well as her more recent works, such as *American Archeology #1: Roosevelt Island* (1994) (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 14-15). In the latter work, Monk employed her perpetual “interest in excavating sites for their past and present layers” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 15) by referencing numerous historical structures on Roosevelt Island that no longer existed at the time of the performance. The audience was presented with simultaneous performances and activities to view, driving the audience to a final configuration that providing them with a concluding and resonating image: “a procession of the whole cast in their costumes of various eras... [with] the Manhattan skyline in the background...” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 15). Monk comments on this piece by saying that she “wanted to give them [audience] the room to go down through the layers of presences and beings that had been there on that island in the past” (Monk 2010, 38). Kloetzel and Pavlik comment on this lasting image as one that is “emblematic

of how site choreographers enjoy portraying a place as an accumulation of temporal layers” (2010, 15). Although there were numerous other notable artists that aided in the exploration and creation of the site-specific performance genre, such as Stephen Koplowitz, Ann Carlson, Eiko and Koma Otake, Joann Haigood, and Noemie Lafrance, among others, the works of Trisha Brown and Meredith Monk provide the necessary foundation and characteristics of site-specific performance that are needed to provide context to the subsequent chapters.

Conceptualizing Site-Specific Performance

The following discussion of the particularities of a site-specific performance will help constitute a working definition of this genre while providing several notable and common characteristics. It is important to note that the aim of this next section is not to conclude with an “all-encompassing paradigm of site-specific practice”(Wilkie 2002, 140), as Fiona Wilkie relates to her difficulties with classifying site-specific performance, but to investigate some general concepts and questions that will hopefully provide a broad understanding of the variable nature of site-specific performance. While site-specific performance has “matured as a practice” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 16) over the last 60 years, this genre has not witnessed the same level of “development in theoretical and scholarly terms” (2010, 16) as that of site-specific visual arts or public art. However, this next section will draw upon the previous detailed discussion of public art’s history and classifications while borrowing, interpreting, and adapting several of the same specificity concepts and that were earlier explored. Although this section will not pose a

concrete definition of site-specific performance, it does aim to provide a tangible and interconnected relationship with public art.

Site-specific

The term “site-specific” first emerged in the visual art world in the late 1960s and 1970s, referring to artwork that was “creatively tailored for a particular location” (Ferdman 2010, 44) (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 10). Associated with the minimalist art movement, the initial construct of “site” was rooted in the physical, i.e. “the architecture of the space” (Ferdman 2010, 44). However, the term’s progression is marked with a perpetual imbuelement of ambiguity, demonstrating a complicated and complex relationship between site and performance that parallels a similar relationship between public and art. While there are numerous players in the site discussion and theorization, such as Lucy Lippard, Nick Kaye, and James Meyer, among others, Miwon Kwon, who largely contributed to the earlier public art discussion, is considered a “dominant figure” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 10) and is repeatedly used by other scholars in the discussion of site-specificity, and thus will provide the majority of insight (Ferdman 2010, 44-46). While Kwon will contribute to the more theoretical discussion of site, Fiona Wilkie, author of “Mapping the Terrain: a Survey of Site-Specific Performance in Britain” will provide a practical context to the discussion of site as she primarily draws her findings from practicing site-specific performing artists and choreographers (Wilkie 2002, 140-160).

In *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Kwon initially identifies the notion of “site” – prominently in regards to site-specific visual art –

as one that focuses on “a unique combination of physical elements: length, depth, height, texture, and shape of walls and rooms; scale and proportion of plazas, buildings, or parks; existing condition of lighting, ventilation, traffic patterns; distinctive topographical features, and so forth” (2002, 11). In the context of Kwon’s former description, the art in question is characterized by an inextricable relationship with the site, perhaps even a symbiotic relationship in the artist’s purview. To elaborate on this concept, let us examine the earlier public art example *Titled Arc* by Richard Serra. After *Titled Arc* was removed in 1989, Serra – who was vehemently opposed to the removal of the sculpture – furthered his argument by claiming that “*Titled Arc* was conceived from the start as a site-specific sculpture and was not meant to be ‘site-adjusted’ or ‘relocated.’ ... The works become part of the site and restructure both conceptually and perceptually the organization of the site” (Serra 2002, 12). While this former discussion was framed largely around the visual arts or public art, in the context of site-specific performance art this discussion denotes a different – yet similar – set of implications. For instance, although the Trisha Brown piece *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* was performed at several locations, each time the piece was reconstructed on a different building it was *adapted* to that new site and not just taken from one location and transposed on another. Although the live nature of Brown’s piece – and for that matter, most site-specific performances – allows for easier relocation and adaptability, it does not imply that its relationship to a site is any less imperative than the connection between public art and a site. As demonstrated in both Kwon’s and Serra’s comments, the specificity of the artwork to the site is a key determinant to the concept of site-specific

art, whether the art is visual *or* performance; the “site” in site-specific is irreplaceable and presents an undeniable imperative to the artistic intentions.

While this discussion has conceptually referenced “site” as physical, what exactly does this mean? Drawing from the results of a survey of site-specific performance artists, performers, choreographers, etc., Fiona Wilkie delineates the “most popular” locations for site-specific performances as the following: parks and playgrounds; work buildings and sites (e.g. abandoned factories and office buildings); churches; galleries and theatre buildings; museums and their grounds; beaches and tunnels (2002, 144). Perhaps the most obvious conclusion from Wilkie’s list is that site-specific performances are located outside (in the open) just as much as they are inside (enclosed in a defined space). The former may seem apparent in regards to the previous mentioning of Allan Kaprow, Merce Cunningham and Anna Halprin, where the major impetuses for these artists to explore nontraditional performance venues was to eradicate the separation between performer and audience. Continuing on this line of thought, the easiest way to reconceptualize the relationship between performer and audience was to remove the division, i.e. the theatre. However, according to the writings of Kwon, among others, simply relocating the art from the theatre to the streets does not denote a site-specific performance; an important point to assimilate because it is this same argument that plays a crucial role in the subsequent chapter of public performance art.

Performance

Although the site-specific performance genre has origins in the post-modern dance movement, the vocabularies of current site-specific choreographers are quite

varied. Movement styles can range from classically balletic to pedestrian post-modern to theatrical with spoken word to even circus-like with ropes and riggings. Site-specific choreographers are also adding an additional dimension to their performances by bringing in non-native objects and elaborate costumes into the physical site. As site-specific performances are not restricted to any one style of dance, it is necessary to briefly discuss the various manifestations of this protean genre.

As previously noted, site-specific performance has origins in the Happenings and the post-modern dance movement that was largely associated with Allan Kaprow, Merce Cunningham, Anna Halprin and the dancers of Judson Dance Theatre, most notably Lucinda Childs, Trisha Brown and Meredith Monk. The earliest works of these artists were largely characterized as post-modern dance: experiential and participatory (Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 parts*); simple every day movements, pedestrian and non-dance like (Halprin and Brown); linear and grounded in modern dance (Brown and Monk); to extravagant and gravity-defying (Brown) (Goldberg 1988, 128-130; (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 10). Currently practicing site-specific performance choreographers, such as Stephen Koplowitz, Joana Haigood, Ann Carlson, Eiko and Koma Otake, Noemie Lafrance, Meredith Monk, Leah Stein, Wili Dorner, among numerous others, all use their own unique interpretations of site-specific performance, each translating to a varied and wide-ranging vocabulary of movement styles (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010). Stephen Koplowitz, for example, is known for creating "multimedia [performance] works in architecturally significant urban sites" (Stephen Koplowitz Projects) with dance movements based in modern and post-modern vocabularies. Koplowitz's *The Grand Step*

Project (2004), a site-adaptive work that was performed in numerous grand staircases across New York City – most notably the New York Public Library – engaged the performers to first roll down staircases then join into a traditional dance ensemble, characterized by classical movement vocabularies that were easily definable. Just across the river in Brooklyn, Noemie Lafrance and her company Sens Production, produce “site-specific dance work that integrates choreography in urban landscapes and explores the dynamics of movement in public space.” Lafrance’s work is varied, ranging from the more classically-based modern dance movements in *Decent* (2001) to the recent installation piece *Melt*, where eight performers were “perched on a wall and wrapped in sculptural beeswax and lanolin costumes” (Sens Productions) that slowly melted away during the progression of the performance; the dancers emanating this emotional narrative by laboriously gesturing and collapsing, “progressing in euphoria and exhaustion as if approaching the sun” (Sens Productions 2010).

Highlighting some observations from this previous discussion, it is important to note that site-specific performance does not readily adhere nor conform to one specific mode of dance vocabulary. Even amongst site-specific scholars and practitioners there are “concerns about categorization” (2010, 19) as expressed by Kloetzel and Pavlik in reference to the numerous site-specific choreographers they interviewed for their book *Site Dance*. Bertie Ferdman uses Noemie Lafrance and Sense Productions as a primary case study for her dissertation, “Contemporary Site-Specific Theatre in New York City: Performance, the City, and Spatial Politics”; it is important to point out the disparity between the descriptors used by Ferdman, “site-specific theatre” and those used by

Lafrance to describe her own work, “site-specific dance work” (Sens Productions 2010). In “Mapping the Terrain” Wilkie claims that site-specific performance, specifically in relation to funding mechanisms, “does not operate as a category in itself...instead, such work has been variously funded under the banners of ‘visual arts’, ‘combined arts’, ‘performing art’, ‘drama’, ‘multidisciplinary arts’, ‘dance’, ‘collaborative arts’, and ‘theatre’” (2002, 147). Apparent from this discussion is a lack of a comprehensive distinguishing name under which to classify this genre of performance, and as such, the term “site-specific performance” is determined to be the most suited appellation. The label itself is not import; what *is* important is the recognition of the difficulty here in providing a comprehensive descriptor. One of the underlying intents of this thesis is to provide further recognition to this genre. Some may argue that site-specific performance is already appropriately recognized, however according to Kloetzel and Pavlik, “ site-specific choreographers have rarely been asked to talk about their endeavors, and their examination of their performances seldom tiptoe across the pages of dance, theatre, and performance studies journals” (xiii, 2010). Furthermore, this genre does not have the luxury of employing a traditional run at a theatre; site-specific performances are often impromptu or even unnoticed by the general public as was the case in Lucinda Childs’ *Street Dance* piece. At the very least, this discussion of labeling will provide a foundation for future conversations concerning site-specific performance.

The Intersection of Site-Specific Performance and Public Art

Drawing from the previous sections there are several fundamental components that determine a relationship – albeit complex – between site-specific performance and public art. While these links were previously mentioned in an implicit manner, this next section will explicitly elaborate on the inextricable parallels between these two forms of artistic expression. Although, perhaps, there are an abundance of connections between site-specific performance and public art, this thesis identifies connection to location and accessibility as *the* two most prominent and important correlations that will provide context to the undeniable association between them; framing the argument for site-specific performance to be viewed as a form of public art, thus receiving the same levels of attention and support.

In the second chapter it was established that the earliest forms of official public art in the United States, such as *La Grande Vitesse* in the city of Grand Rapids, were autonomous works of art that were simply relocated from the museum and placed in a public setting. As these works of public art provided no apparent relationship to their location, the subsequent abundant criticisms reshaped the guidelines for public supported art, necessitating all new works be “appropriate to the immediate site” (Kwon 2002, 65), and imbued the foundation of public art with site-specificity as central to the creation process. As demonstrated in public art, site-specificity is also inherent to site-specific performance. Although this may seem obvious, it is perhaps complex in the sense that site-specificity is not always clearly delineated, as this relationship between site and art can be abstract and ambiguous, specifically to the public audience. To demonstrate this

complexity, two previous examples detailed in this thesis will be used: Suzanne Lacy's public art installation in Chicago, *Full Circle*, and Meredith Monk's site-specific performance, *American Archeology #1: Roosevelt Island*. *Full Circle*, an overnight installation that placed one hundred boulders throughout Chicago's Loop neighborhood, each commemorating a Chicago woman, was in fact, site-specific as a comprehensive project (Lacy 2010, xxi). However, when analyzing each component, or the location of each boulder, the correlation becomes more ambiguous. In *American Archeology #1: Roosevelt Island* the relationship between the site and the performance is rooted in the ethereal and intangible, namely the history of the site; thus, the correlation between site and art is more ambiguous than other site-specific performances as the audience may or may not be privy to the same historical knowledge as the choreographer. Whether or not the relationship is clear, the most important point to ascertain from this discussion is the *intention* of site-specificity as a primary impetus for the creation of both site-specific performance and public art. This former brief discussion is just an introduction to a larger thematic query that has some significant implications, especially when the art in question is publicly funded. These ideas and questions play an integral role in the subsequent two sections and as such, will be further discussed and explored.

The second identifiable correlation between public art and site-specific performance is accessibility, and much like the former claim of site-specificity, the latter correlation is also complex. Established in the earlier discussion of public art, one of the three pillars or interpretations of the "public" was public space. Although the earlier treatment of this concept was simplified into a private-public dichotomy (domestic space

and non-domestic space), this binary metaphor for public art provides the crux of the idea that is inherent to this section's argument: open accessibility. Public art, whether commissioned by public (government) or private (non-government) entities is deemed "public" due to its "unrestricted physical access" (Kwon 2002, 65). Furthermore, the aesthetics of public art are often subjective and varied, and as Jack Becker comments, this multifaceted genre "encompasses a wide variety of creative expressions... the possibilities are endless" (2004, 1). How then is it possible to decipher which is public art and which is just art? Although this former question is largely rhetorical, the figurative answer is accessibility. It is this indispensable and inherent philosophy of public art that relates to site-specific performance. However, as discussed earlier, site-specific performances are not necessarily performed in an open location that is readily accessible to the public.

Based on the assessment of the book, *Site Dance*, which chronicles the works of 16 prominent site-specific performance choreographers in the United States, all of the artists have produced site-specific works that were openly accessible and free to the public at one time or another in their careers. A prime example was *The Grand Step Project*, which was performed in several openly accessible public locations, such as the public library. Stephen Koplowitz comments on his work as one that "was conceived as a very big public art event" (Koplowitz), however this situation does not always hold true. For instance, Noemie Lafrance's work, *Melt*, had a ticket price of \$25-40 and was treated as an intimate installation performance piece. Despite this priced performance, Lafrance has also produced free productions, such as *Agora*, which – perhaps coincidentally – was

located in a publicly (government) owned location (Sense Productions, *Melt*). Perhaps the location of a site-specific performance is what establishes it public, such as whether or not the space is openly accessible and free? Although the intent of this section was accessibility, specifically in regards to the correlation between site-specific performance and public art, the former discussion brought to light more questions than it answered and did not necessarily solidify the open accessibility connection. While there is undoubtedly a relationship between these two art forms rooted in public access, the process of exploring their complex relationship helps further clarify whether or not site-specific performance can be openly accessible. The former claim, however, is based in the assumption that site-specific performance and public art are two separate genres of artistic expression. What if site-specific performance art is produced by the same mechanisms that are employed by those who produce public art? Not only would said site-specific art need to abide by the public principles, i.e. access, location, audience, but the public art program could also be more nimble and adaptive as site-specific performances are temporary and ephemeral, where as the majority of public art projects are permanent (Becker 2004, 3). It is this amalgam of public art and site-specific performance that the following chapter will explore in the case study of the San Francisco Arts Commission's Public Art Program, Art on Market Street Temporary Project.

CHAPTER 4

THE ART

The temporary in public art is not about an absence of commitment or involvement but about an intensification and enrichment of the conception of public...the temporary provides the flexible, adjustable, and critical vehicle to explore the relationship of lasting values and current events...A conceptualization of the idea of time in public art is a prerequisite for a public life that enables inspired change.

—Patricia C. Phillips, “Temporality and Public Art”

According to Patricia C. Phillips, independent art critic and frequent writer on ephemeral public art, “immutability is valued by society” (1992, 295). Further espousing her treatment of this appreciated unchangeability, she positions her argument in the context of public art, hypothesizing the paradoxical relationship that society has with public art; perhaps all art for that matter? (Phillips 1992, 295). At one end of the spectrum, society has an inclination for “steadfast art that expresse[s] permanence” (Phillips 1992, 295), while conversely, there is a preference for art that is “contemporary and timely” (1992, 295) and readily able to respond to the current societal context. Although Phillips’ argument is a broad generalization of the public’s ethos of public art, which this author does not necessarily agree with, she does provide an edifying perspective on the importance of ephemerality. Her purview on the importance of temporariness, nimbleness and responsiveness are foundational components that weave a connecting thread through the following section and adumbrates a central thematic

revelation for the following chapter and a final conclusive observation: a transitory approach to both public support and to public artworks.

Although public art, both in its theoretical and practical constructs, was thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two, a key component has yet to be fully explored: the commissioning agent, i.e., the public art program. In Chapter Two, public art was examined through a historical and theoretical framework. Even though numerous practical examples were utilized, a major piece of the public art equation was not elucidated, and as such, this chapter will focus on the conventional public art program. Beginning conceptually with a broad exploration of the field as a general entity in the United States, the investigation then refines the examination to explore a specific public art program, the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) which is the municipal art agency of the city and county of San Francisco. After providing an understanding of the various components of a public art program, including administrative procedures, funding sources and ordinances, etc., this section will focus on a specific initiative of the SFAC's public art program, the Art on Market St. Temporary Projects Program. Although temporary public art is a common practice of public art programs throughout the United States, the Art on Market St. Temporary Projects Program (AMSTPP) is worthy of notice because it commissions temporary projects that are of a performance nature; "events" as they are referred to on the SFAC website (San Francisco Arts Commission 2008). In an interview with Judy Moran, Market Street Coordinator and Project Manager for the Public Art Program, she says "it is true that most temporary projects are not performances. I wouldn't want to say that we [AMSTP] are completely unique, but more

of the exception rather than the rule” (Moran March 2011). While there are several other public art programs in the United States that commission public performance, most notably the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s annual site-specific performance series, Sitelines, the author has identified very few programs that have a codified and established commissioning structure as that of AMSTPP. Furthermore, the AMSTP program, in one form or another, has been in existence for nearly 20 years, which Moran comments as possibly being the longest running municipal temporary public art program in the U.S.⁹ (Moran 2011). Further relevance and notability of this program will be discussed; however it is necessary to provide an introductory understanding of the rationale to use the AMSTP program. Drawing from the public art discussion in Chapter Two and site-specific performance in Chapter Three, there are several notable features of the AMSTP program that directly correlate with both the precepts of the public art genre as well as the consciousness of location displayed in site-specific performance. Producing a hybrid of these genres of artistic expression, the AMSTP program is a paradigm of what this thesis refers to as, public performance art. The following section will draw from existing sources, such as media releases, government documents, and information from the Public Art Network (PAN) of Americans for the Arts (AFTA), including the 2001 survey and report, *Public Art Programs Fiscal Year 2001: A Detailed Statistical Report on the Budgets and Programming of the Nation’s Public Art Programs During Fiscal Year 200*.

⁹ In the interview, Judy Moran was explicit in saying that she could not verify this comment as fact; said comment is based on her over-all knowledge of and involvement in the public art field (which includes involvement in the Americans for the Art Public Art Network. Based on the author’s research, he too believes this comment to be true, however this is a hard claim to quantify since the public art field is such a large confluence of varied hybrids of public art programs, both private and public. The location of temporary public art programs will be further discussed in this chapter.

The survey report includes information derived from over 100 public art programs in the U.S., and was also the source for Jack Becker, founder of FORECAST Public Artworks and the national journal *Public Art Review*, who authored “Public Art: An Essential Component of Creative Communities”. The following chapter will also draw from interviews with two employees from the SFAC, Judy Moran, Market Street Coordinator and Project Manager for the Public Art Program, and Kate Patterson, Public Information Officer, both of whom provided internal insight on the SFAC agency as a whole as well as the public art program of the SFAC, and the AMSTPP. A culmination of the previous two chapters, what follows will explore some practical implications of a public performance art program, demonstrating a relationship between public art and site-specific performance as executed in the context of a local arts agency.

The Public Art Program

Located in “airports, train stations, libraries, parks, streetscapes, government buildings, and neighborhoods – urban, suburban, and rural” (Becker 2004, 2), public art is a ubiquitous element of society. Apart from the artists that create the artwork, who or what facilitates the process for the creation of the public art? The simple answer to this question: a public art program. According to Jack Becker, a public art program is an entity that administers the “development and management of public art” (2004, 1) in their respective communities by “commissioning or purchasing artwork for permanent or temporary display” (2004, 1). Apart from these primary duties, public art programs help to physically maintain their collections including restoration and repair; develop communication platforms such as educational and promotional programs; cultivate

strategic partnership opportunities with both public and private organizations; and finally, accede to the role of public face for the organization with which they are associated (Becker 2004, 1). In accordance with the *Public Art Programs* report, in 2004 Becker claimed that “[today], there are more than 350 public art programs” (2004, 2) with the majority of those programs (81 percent) housed within a government agency, in the form of a public art commission or an office of arts and cultural affairs¹⁰ (2004, 2). In addition to the core staff that help administer the day-to-day activities of a public art program, most agencies prescribe a volunteer citizen’s advisory board – often appointed by top city officials such as a mayor or county board – to advise the staff and provide recommendations “concerning sites for public artworks, the nature of public artworks, and allocations from [a body of funds]” (Goldstein 2005, 22) among other priorities which often vary from program to program (Becker 2004, 2-3). In the discussion of public art programs that are located in a public or governmental agency, it is important to highlight the funding structures that many of them employ, namely a percent-for-art ordinance or policy, which was briefly mentioned in Chapter Two.

A public art ordinance is a law that can either establish the public art program within a division of the larger government; and/or identifies a funding mechanism for the program; and/or establishes a general set of guidelines for the operations of the public art program (Becker 2004, 5; Goldstein 2005). These identified funding mechanisms, often

¹⁰ The reference here of an office of arts and cultural affairs as well as an arts commission should be understood as a national, regional, state or local art agency, however, a caveat to this denotation; most, if not close to all, of the major public art programs are housed in local arts agencies. Funding, however, can originate from a national, regional, or state agency, but the majority of the public art administration is supported on the local level. It is important to note that this note is only refers to public art programs housed in a government agency (Goldstein 2005).

referred to as “percent-for-art”, allocate a small percentage ($\frac{1}{2}$ to 2%) of any new capital projects – ranging from the construction of a new government building to the improvement of an existing structure – that are then applied to the commissioning of new public artworks (Goldstein 2005). Although often a dedicated source of funding, albeit one that can severely fluctuate from year to year, public art supported through this structure is highly dependent upon the exact wording of the ordinance or policy, an important determinant because “[funding] may be so restricted that it prescribes the kinds of artworks the program can commission as well as their related costs” (Goldstein 2005, 16). These potential restrictions will later be factored into the discussion of the SFAC.

The Private Public Art Organization

Although the majority of public art programs are housed within a government agency, 19% of the public art producing organizations are private nonprofits that operate under a similar structure as a public art agency. An even smaller number “operate independently” (Becker 2004, 2), i.e. the mission of these organizations is to strictly commission and present public art. Although not a novel concept, these organizations present an innovative paradigm to the traditional structure of public art agencies. There are two organizations that operate under this configuration and are consistently referenced: Public Art Fund and Creative Time (Becker 2004, 2; Goldstein 2005, 52-60; Phillips 1992, 299). Located in New York City, both of these organizations “support and encourage the production of temporary, ephemeral public art” (Phillips 1992, 299), and as such, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of these two private public art organizations. Their treatments of the public realm as “laborator[ies] for artistic

experimentation” (Goldstein 2005, 52) demonstrate an interesting programmatic structure that is attributed to their private organizational arrangement, and provides useful insight for the subsequent analysis on the argument of public agency vs. private organization.

The Public Art Fund

Founded in 1977, the Public Art Fund (PAF) is “New York's leading presenter of artists' projects, new commissions, and exhibitions in public spaces” (Public Art Fund), with a variety of their commissions temporarily situated in a diverse array of neighborhoods and urban contexts (Phillips 1992, 300). Their predominant conduit for commissioning temporary public artworks is through the *In the Public Realm* programming initiative that aims to “foster innovation and experimentation among emerging artists” (Public Art Fund) while providing them with a public platform to “investigate the physical, social and psychological nature of the urban environment” (Bach 2005, 67). One notable, ephemeral project of the PAF is the ongoing *Messages to the Public* series which began in 1982 (Phillips 1992, 300). Utilizing one of the large projection screens on the One Times Square building façade, artists program short episodic vignettes that cycle roughly every 20 minutes between advertisements, creating a discernible “ambiguity between the art moment and the ad” (Phillips 1992, 300). PAF is a standalone private organization that solely facilitates the creation of public art as its mission, and is a notable and highly respected organization that effectively demonstrates another option to the traditional government model of a public art program.

Creative Time

“Creative time has a reputation for commissioning and presenting exciting art – everything from milk cartons to billboards to skywriting to fireworks – to enhance the public realm” (2005, 53) claims Penny Balkin Bach in the chapter “Private Funding Models” in *Public Art by the Book*. Perhaps one of their highest profile projects to date, Creative Time sponsored *Tribute in Light*, the temporary light installation and memorial located at the site of the destroyed World Trade Center (Bach 2005, 53). Operating for over 30 years, Creative Time is a nonprofit organization that provides artists with a platform to “engage in dynamic conversation[s] between site, audience, and context” (Creative Time). Their public artworks, or “temporary interventions” (Creative Time) as referenced in the Creative Time mission, are diverse and integrated, paralleling the locations their artworks are installed in and the contexts these works interact with. Although Creative Time is a major facilitator in the creation of temporary public artworks, what makes them a notable addition to this discussion is their production of site-specific performance events; largely associated with one of their “most famous and long-lasting series” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2010, 16) *Art on the Beach*. Occurring from 1978 to 1985 and located at the former Battery Park City Landfill, this important initiative not only presented numerous site-specific performance artists, such as the earlier mentioned Eiko and Koma Otake, yet also provided a public setting for artists to be experimental. Patricia C. Phillips, a proponent for *Art on the Beach*, comments that “[it] thus became a continuing laboratory for examining the relationship of collaborative process to aesthetic production in temporary work” (1992, 300). Although discontinued

due to the development of Battery Park City, *Art on the Beach* was an important early initiative that supported public performance art. While Creative Time and the Public Art Fund are exemplary organizations that produce temporary public art, they are also important to this discussion because of their private organizational structure. To provide some context to this discussion, according to the 2001 Public Art Network survey report, *Public Art Programs Fiscal year 2001*, private nonprofit public art programs, much like their public counterparts, are largely reliant on government support (Americans for the Arts, 2003). While this observation may seem an obvious one, there is still the source of funding through earned revenue which has yet to be fully explored and explicitly integrated into this conversation, largely due in part because public art is free. The notion of earned revenue is more or less a moot point in the discussion of public art; however, a private nonprofit public art program has the ability to fundraise, etc, whereas governmental public art programs do not have the same fundraising luxuries. This is simply a preliminary probe to begin the conversation on this wavering argument, government vs. private, however it is not in the scope of this thesis to fully extrapolate or make a conclusive decision on the optimal organizational structure for a public art program. This quandary is something that will later be touched upon in the subsequent analysis section following the discussion on the San Francisco Arts Commission.

The San Francisco Arts Commission

Established in 1932 by Charter sections 5.103 and 16.106, the “San Francisco Arts Commission is the City agency that champions the arts in San Francisco [and] believe[s] that a creative cultural environment is essential to the City’s well-being” (The

San Francisco Arts Commission). As stated in the City Charter, the agency is charged to “encourage artistic awareness, participation and expression” (Charter sections 5.103 and 16.106), and does so through its nine core programming initiatives: City Hall Docent Tours, Civic Design Review, Community Arts and Education, Cultural Equity Grants, Public Art: Art Enrichment and the Civic Art Collection, the SFAC Gallery, Street Artists, and the San Francisco Symphony – Engaging Communities. By providing a myriad of cultural services, the San Francisco Arts Commission is able to achieve its “overarching goal...[of] access” (The San Francisco Arts Commission), thus ensuring the “arts [are] available to each and every person in San Francisco” (The San Francisco Arts Commission). Although the SFAC has numerous components that deem it a stellar local arts agency, it is also one of the largest in terms of funding; in 2005 it was the “second largest urban funder” with the combined expenditures of both the SFAC and the city’s Grants for the Arts program totaling \$20.4 million (National Endowment for the Arts 2007). While the SFAC as a whole is a model local arts agency, its public art program, specifically the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program, is the key component of this larger organization that this thesis will further investigate.

Public Art: Art Enrichment

Created by City ordinance in 1969, San Francisco’s Public Art Program – one of the first in the country – is a conduit for “[promoting] a diverse and stimulating cultural environment” (San Francisco Arts Commission) in San Francisco. The Public Art Program helps to develop and implement “public art that is specific and meaningful to the site and to the community” (San Francisco Arts Commission), an important foundation of

public art as discussed in Chapter Two. Working with numerous City agencies and private organizations and corporations, the staff of the public art program provides comprehensive guidance and management of a project, from inception to completion, including “development of project guidelines...curatorial research and coordination of artist selection...facilitation of community involvement...coordination of interaction between artists, City representatives, [and] project architects...[and] supervision and inspection of art project installation” (San Francisco Arts Commission). Although funded in part from the City, the Public Art Program is also largely supported by a percent for art ordinance – called the Art Enrichment Ordinance – that prescribes “two percent of the gross estimated construction cost” (San Francisco Administrative Code, Section 3.19) of all City funded projects that include “proposed public buildings, aboveground structures, [and] parks and transportation improvement projects” (San Francisco Administrative Code, Section 3.19). While said ordinance outlines a funding mechanism, albeit one that is not necessarily consistent and does include several exemptions, it is the “Policies and Guidelines for the Public Art Program” that determines the standard operational procedures for the City’s acquisition of artwork, be it through “Art Enrichment Ordinance, Gifts or Bequests, or by any other method” (San Francisco Administrative Code, Section 3.19). Located in the policies and guidelines are numerous definitions that help provide clarity and determinacy in the interpretation of the Art Enrichment Ordinance and its execution. Prior to discussing the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program, it is important to first highlight and discuss several of the definitions.

Beginning broad and then refining: the first description to note is for “Art Enrichment or Public Art”. The Policy and Guidelines stipulates that said terms, i.e. art enrichment and public art, are interchangeable and refer to “works of art purchased or commissioned with funds generated by the Art Enrichment Ordinance” (Policies and Guidelines for the Public Art Program 2007). Per the guidelines, an “Artwork, or Work of Art, is defined as including, but is not limited to, paintings, drawing, murals in any media, stained glass, statues, bas relief or other sculptures; other structures of a permanent or temporary character intended for ornament or commemoration, integrated and functional architectural elements designed by the Artist, video and other media-based works” (3, 1997). Apparent in this definition is the elucidation to an emphasis of correlating public art as a form of visual art, which, in its most basic concepts, references art that is primarily visual in nature: painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, design, architecture and the decorative arts, craft, photography, video and film, etc. (Honour and Fleming, 1999). Even the volunteer citizen’s advisory board that “reviews and approves all programs, activities, acquisitions, design proposals and public art projects” (Policies and Guidelines for the Public Art Program 2007) is called the Visual Arts Committee (VAC), solidifying the purview of the Art Enrichment Ordinance to only allocate funds to public artworks that are visual in nature. With this restricted funding structure in place, how then does the SFAC fund and produce the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects, a program that produces public art that is not only visual, but highly inclusive of performance and dance?

Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program

In 1991 the reconstruction of Market Street, a major thoroughfare that runs through the “heart” of San Francisco, provided greater ease of transportation and became the catalyst for the creation of the Market Street Art in Transit Temporary Projects Program (Moran 2002). A one-time deal was struck to pool funds from the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), the public agency responsible for the Market Street expansion construction (Moran 2011). Similar to the funding mechanism of the Art Enrichment Ordinance, a certain percentage of the Market Street construction was allocated to public art projects, however, due to strategic bargaining on the part of the San Francisco Arts Commission, these construction funds were not restricted to visual art projects. With funds from PUC and Gannett, the Market Street Art in Transit Temporary Projects Program was activated, commissioning six to eight temporary projects annually that ranged from an aerial site-specific piece performed on the side of the Main San Francisco Public Library; a radio broadcast that detailed the street life and commerce of Market Street and subsequently transitioned into a do-it-yourself walking tour; a multi-faceted theatrical performance and commemoration of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake centennial; and a site-specific aerial dance performance on the clock tower of the iconic San Francisco Ferry Building, to name a few (Moran 2002; San Francisco Arts Commission). Operating from 1992 until 1998, the Market Street Art in Transit Temporary Projects Program commissioned nearly 40 temporary projects of dance, performance, installation, music concerts, etc., until the original PUC funds were reduced “to a level at which the budget was insufficient for supporting the continuation of the

original scope of the program” (Moran 2002), as detailed in Judy Moran’s 2002 Staff Report to the Visual Arts Committee. After several years of inactivity, the Arts Commission staff recommended reactivating this “popular program” that they credited as being an “important promotional asset for the Arts Commission as the events were typically covered by the media” (Moran 2002). Through a combination of remaining PUC funds and from an annual surplus of the Gannet funds, the SFAC reactivated the Art in Transit Program under a new name: The Art on Market Street Temporary Projects (AMSTP); an “innovative program of activities that enliven San Francisco’s main thoroughfare and engage Market Street businesses, residents and visitors with ... contemporary art” as described in the Program’s Overview (San Francisco Arts Commission, Art on Market Street Temporary Projects). The reincarnated program was also significantly scaled down, only commissioning one to two projects per year with an annual total budget of \$35,000 (Moran 2002). In accordance with other public art projects, the AMSTP employs a competitive vetting process that – as specified in the 2009 Call for Artists – is limited to “artists residing full time in the nine Bay Area counties” (San Francisco Arts Commission, Art on Market Street Temporary Projects), works in “a variety of media, including performance, dance and visual arts...[and has] documented experience in creating multi-disciplinary, multi-layered projects appropriate for a broad public audience” (San Francisco Arts Commission, Art on Market Street Temporary Projects). It is also important to note a detail in the Call for Artists that stipulates the location of the project, both physically and socially: “Projects must primarily occur on Market Street... and reflect the complexity of life in an active urban

environment” (San Francisco Arts Commission, Art on Market Street Temporary Projects). Mentioning of these requirements sets the foundation to discuss AMSTP’s most recent commission, “Sailing Away”.

“Sailing Away”. Choreographed by Joanna Haigood, artistic director of Zaccho Dance Theatre, “Sailing Away” is a notable example from this program because it comprises the essence of a public performance artwork: site-specificity, publicly open and accessible, and belonging to the performance genre. “Sailing Away” told the story of “eight prominent African Americans who lived and worked near Market Street during the mid-nineteenth century and ... [narrates] the mass exodus of African Americans from San Francisco in 1858” (Sailing Away 2010). “Using gestures and incorporating sites and monuments” (Sailing Away 2010), “Sailing Away” aimed to create a feeling of the streetscape and commerce of Market Street during the 19th century, while narrating and elucidating the important role African Americans played in the “shaping of the city... but, tragically, [is] largely unknown” (Sailing Away 2010), comments Luis R. Cancel, Director of Cultural Affairs for the San Francisco Arts Commission. The performance ran in one continuous loop of 30-minute cycles in a four hour block each day, for four consecutive days in the beginning of October, a suitable time of the year for a public performance as the chance of rain is minimal and the average temperature for San Francisco is near its apex. The performers were dressed in 19th century clothing and employed a “clever” and “very immediate interactive component” (Kate Patterson 2011), commented Kate Patterson, Public Information Officer for the SFAC. By having one of the performers pass out newspapers, which doubled as programs for the piece, the

audience was provided with additional historical context through maps, biographies, and a detailing of events (San Francisco Arts Commission). With clear delineation that the performers were in a “parallel universe” (Judy Moran 2011), i.e. the performance was not confused with normal street life on Market St. (which at times *can* be quite theatrical), “Sailing Away” was witnessed by hundreds of passer-bys (Judy Moran 2011, Kate Patterson 2011). While impossible to quantify, Judy Moran speculates that the performance was viewed by both those who had prior knowledge of the performance from various press and media coverage outlets but also viewed by those who happened to be walking by, at the right place at the right time. Moran comments that most of the viewers were probably people who were walking by, noticed the performance and stopped. Not entirely impromptu, however, the location on Market Street is constantly filled with copious amounts of pedestrians, providing a vast source of potential patrons. Unfortunately the author was not able to witness this performance live; however, drawing from press and media coverage as well as interviews with SFAC employees who were present at the performance, the former discussion provided the appropriate level of foundation to analyze the Art on Market St. Temporary Projects Program in terms of its successful execution as a public performance art program.

Analysis of the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program. Beginning with the most appropriate and prominent question in conjunction with this analysis: why utilize Art on Market Street Temporary Projects (AMSTP) Program of the SFAC? After all, as previously discussed there are several organizations that already produce temporary site-specific artwork. Ephemeral and engaging work is a major component of

Creative Time and the Public Art Fund, albeit both organizations operate under a private 501(c)3 structure. Perhaps it is the nature of the outside dance performances, as displayed in “Sailing Away”, that grants AMSTP its notability? In Chicago, the Department of Cultural Affairs annually produces the Chicago SummerDance festival, which, according to the event’s website, is the “[l]argest annual outdoor dance series in the United States” (City of Chicago: Department of Cultural Affairs). Although the event is public, openly accessible, and provides dance performance in a nontraditional venue, SummerDance lacks the adequate physical specificity (although it can be argued that the dance being presented is specific to Chicago). Not to disvalue the importance of this festival, however, SummerDance is – simply put – a dance performance relocated from a theatre to an outside venue. Perhaps, then, it is the correlation between artistic content and location? Is it the social specificity of the African American population with Market Street? Dancing in the Streets, an organization in New York City that specifically focuses on site-specific performances, “strives to illuminate the urban experience with free public performances and site-specific installations” (Dancing in the Streets), and as far as this author can tell, does an exemplary job of commissioning site-specific performances that are free and accessible to the public. Also in New York, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that “produces cultural events and promotes the arts through grants, services, advocacy, and cultural development programs” (Lower Manhattan Cultural Council). The LMCC operates similar to a local art agency, and through its public programming produces Sitelines, “a ‘decidedly downtown’ take on site-specific performance with a selection of sites as eclectic as the artist line-up” (Lower

Manhattan Cultural Council). Out of all the programs, organizations, and events discussed, Sitalines is the best example in terms of the aforementioned characteristics of a public performance art program, i.e. site-specificity, publicly open and accessible, and belonging to the performance genre, and – in the purview of this author – the most programmatically successful in presenting a varied sample of public site-specific performances. However there is still a missing component, albeit small, that differentiates Sitalines from the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program; the identification as a public art program.

Judy Moran, Market Street Coordinator and Project Manager for the Public Art Program, was explicit in not labeling the AMSTP program “unique”, commenting that it is “unusual ... I don’t know if it’s unique” (Moran 2011), and to that extent, she is absolutely correct. There are numerous other programs that present astounding examples of temporary site-specific performance, particularly in regards to content and artistic excellence. What makes this program the exception rather than the rule is its location in a public agency. To offer some perspective, it is necessary to recapitulate some context: it was established earlier that the “majority of public art programs (81 percent) are housed within a public agency” (Becker 2004, 2). The remainder of the public art programs, even though they are private, represent the same over-all organizational structure as the public art programs housed in the government, i.e. both public and private programs operate “as part of a larger set of programs and services” (Becker 2004, 2), e.g. the public art program of the SFAC; the public art program of the Regional Arts and Culture Council of the Portland tri-county area; the public art program in the Philadelphia municipal office

of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, etc. However, only three percent of public art programs are stand-alone, i.e. Creative Time and the Public Art Fund, and operate solely as a public art producing organization (Becker 2004, 2; Americans for the Arts 2003, 1) Furthermore, according to the responding public art programs in a survey report, *Public Art Programs Fiscal Year: A Detailed Statistical Report on the Nation's Public Art Programs*, nearly half of the newly commissioned artworks were permanent, with temporary projects accounting for only 9% of public art projects (Becker 2004, 3; Americans for the Arts 2003). One final but important characteristic to note: three quarters of the programs that responded to the survey operate with a public art ordinance; and more importantly, the survey report observes that “public art programs that operate with a public art ordinance tend to have significantly larger and faster-growing budgets than those without an ordinance” (Becker 2004, 5; Americans for the Arts 2003). Synthesizing this information, what can be discerned and what is the correlation to the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program?

The first observation is the emphasis on government; with the majority of programs housed in the government, 73 percent of those public programs receive funding from a “dedicated percent-for-art revenue source” (Americans for the Arts 2003, 3), a funding mechanism that is also governmentally imposed. Compared to private nonprofits, government programs tend to commission more permanent projects with larger budgets as well as purchase existing artwork, while conversely; private nonprofits generally produce more temporary projects (Americans for the Arts 2003, 3). This former observation can prescribe two hypotheses: one, since private nonprofits have budgets

smaller than their governmental counterparts, they produce more temporary projects that “represent less of an investment” (Manton 2009) comments Jill Manton, Director of Programs for the SFAC in reference to temporary projects in general; or two, private nonprofit public art organizations have more flexibility in the allocation of their funds which translates to greater control in the choice of public artworks they commission. While these observations are queries and not facts, they do generate an intriguing question: is it even possible for a government public art program to develop a codified and robust public performance art program? Although the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects is a structured public art program, it is more of an anomaly; an “exception rather than the rule” as Judy Moran described it. Although the funds used to initiate this program were generated from means very similar to an ordinance, a government initiated construction project, the monies used for AMSTP were a one-time investment, only able to sustain the original level of commissioning for six years. Even though the SFAC was able to breathe new life into this program, this model of funding is not necessarily sustainable as this program lacks a dedicated, regenerating source of funding. If this is the case, then perhaps public performance art programs are best left to reside in private nonprofit organizations. After all, private nonprofit organizations have an “advantage” (Moran 2011) as they are a step removed from the bureaucracy, and, as demonstrated in this chapter, most of the organizations that produce site-specific performances are nonprofits. However, according to the *Public Art Programs* survey report, private nonprofits receive most of their funding “from a combination of private contributions...and earned revenue” (Americans for the Arts 2003, 3), two sources of

funding that can greatly fluctuate, accordingly, therein lays the caveat: without a dedicated source of funding, it does not matter if the organization is public *or* private. This argument of government vs. private will not be resolved here, nor will it be fully explored. While the author affirms that both structures have their pros and cons, the ideal or most optimal situation is a municipality that has both a governmental and private public art program, as is the case in New York City. The City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs commissions public art in all City-owned buildings and City initiated construction projects, while Creative Time and the Public Art Fund privately commission public art for non-City owned buildings, etc. Although this situation is ideal, the majority of cities would have difficulty supporting an additional public art program as it is difficult to secure adequate funding for a primary public art program. The focus of this thesis is on publicly housed public art programs, such as AMSTP, however it is important to note the exceptional display of nimbleness and temporariness in the private nonprofit public art organizations. Therein lies the subsequent central question to this former discussion: : how can a public art program located in the government greater assimilate the characteristics of a private nonprofit into both their public art commissions and their operational mechanisms?

From the breadth of this author's research, the most notable characteristic of the Art on Market St. Temporary Projects program is its identity as a codified public art program, albeit one that happens to commission site-specific performances. What the AMSTP Program does is bring to the table the edifying notion that public art is more expansive than the traditionally visual public artworks. Furthermore, temporary public

artworks are becoming more integrated into the lexicon of not only public art programs but the umbrella organization they are housed in. Judy Moran noted that in regards to temporary works, across multiple programs the San Francisco Arts Commission is producing more temporary projects than ever before (2011). While the commissioning of temporary public art is not a novel concept, there is, however, a real lack of codified governmental public art programs that consistently produce site-specific performances, and perhaps this is attributed to the enabling yet restrictive source of their funding: the public art ordinance.

Why are there no public performance art programs? The simple answer is a lack of funding. The more complex response is elucidated through the following question: : what role does the percent for art ordinance play in prohibiting the commissioning of public performances as a form of public art? While the public art ordinance of the SFAC was previously highlighted, unfortunately it is not in the scope of this thesis to probe the exact implications of said question, and as a continuation of this thematic inquiry, the author would like to suggest further research be conducted. Specifically, a thorough analysis of numerous cohorts, i.e. local art agencies and their public art programs, while examining and dissecting the exact wording of their respective ordinances and/or policies that allocate funds as well as provide over-all curatorial guidance and standard operating procedures. Following, the author would recommend interviews with the public art staff and the governing bodies, boards, or advisory councils that determine the final allocation of funds. Although policies and ordinances are guidelines to funding, they are not always 100 % certain as numerous governing documents are designed with loop-holes and

provide myriad interpretations from both parties, public art staff and the municipal officials. The combination of both prongs of research would provide a better understanding of the potentially restrictive nature of a public art ordinance.

There is much, however, that can be surmised from the Art on Market Street Temporary Projects Program. For starters, this program shows that a governmental public art program *can* commission temporary site-specific performances, albeit, with necessary strategic bargaining and deal-making to generate a body of artistically unrestricted funds. Secondly, the AMSTPP commissions are highly publicized and “an important promotional asset for the Arts Commission” (Moran 2002), a claim made in the 2002 staff report that solicited the reinstatement of this program. Kate Patterson, Public Information Officer, remarked that the SFAC generally does not have a budget to do robust marketing and is highly reliant on public relations. Although mostly covered by local media outlets, the performances are a demanding instrument for attention from both the press as well as the public. Finally, the most important component of this program is the receptiveness of the public to the various AMTSPS commissions. Judy Moran commented that since she has been involved in this program, all of the various productions have been extremely successful. When asked what the definition of “success” is for these programs, Moran responded, “to engage the public” (2011), which is exactly what it does. In the San Francisco Chronicle review of the 2006 commissioned performance, “Lotta’s Opera”, the paper’s correspondent notes that the crowd of “at least 300 ... could hardly be bothered... winds were high and lyrics difficult to hear, yet few spectators seemed to care. ‘I come every week to skate here, and today there’s an opera,

that's cool,'" (Howard 2006, E-1) commented Robin Madrigal, a passer-by who was lucky enough to be "swept" into the jovial celebration and commemoration of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. Harking back to the quote used at the beginning of this chapter, Meredith Monk refers to site-specific public performances as a conduit to provoke consciousness and "offers a fresh look at what we take for granted; it reopens the curiosity that is an inherent, fundamental quality of our humanity. Honoring place is a way of grounding us, a way to remain alert to and appreciate the magic of what is" (Monk 50, 2009). Although AMSTP and other public performance art programs provide increased access to the arts as well as provide a fun and engaging event, they provide a platform for connection, civic engagement, and participation. Although a brief and ephemeral moment, the encounter with a public performance will have a long-lasting effect.

CHAPTER 5

FINAL THOUGHTS, CITIES AND HUMAN CONNECTION

This thesis began with cities and it ends with cities. Contextualizing the physical infrastructure of a city as catalyst for the initial efforts of urban amelioration, this thesis explored public art as means for a city to add beauty, aesthetics, humanity and art to the urban landscape. Public art – whether performance or sculptural, temporary or permanent – has an intrinsic correlation to the physical and tangible. However, equally – if not more important – is its relationship to the soft infrastructure of a city: the inhabitants. Currently over half of the world’s population resides in towns and cities, and while these strategic human aggregations were formed thousands of years ago, their foundational impetuses are rather straightforward (World Urbanization Prospects 2004).

The first, and perhaps the most obvious catalyst for city formation, was agriculture; with the onset of static food productions, cities naturally formed around these loci of nutritional sustainability (Bugliarello 151, 2009). The other idea behind city creation is a bit less obvious than the former notion, however, the crux of this idea is just as vital to human life as food and water: connection and compatibility. Derived from the writings of Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and widely regarded as a “seminal figure in twentieth-century American urbanism” (Rybczynski 51, 2010), this idea that cities form because of human interactions resonates in Jacobs’ critique of American cities. Jacobs went on to further claim that street life and

the resulting social relationships and interactions, be it formal or spontaneous, imbue a city with – for lack of a better word – humanness. Although Jacobs' was neither an architect nor a city planner, her theories were largely based on sociological foundations and reallocated attention from a city's hard infrastructure, e.g. buildings, grids, architecture, planning, etc., to its soft infrastructure, i.e. its inhabitants. This is an important concept to note because it begins to place weight on the idea that cities are formed, most simply, because humans need to be together. Perhaps the former is an idealistic claim, considering the civil strife currently plaguing much of the world and its cities; however this former notion is not a means to an end but a means to understanding. True, the genesis and subsequent burgeoning of many major cities was largely attributed to their proximity to an abundance of natural resources, but once those resources are exhausted, what sustains a city? As large urban centers in the United States rebound from their steady declines post World War II, it is important that city planners learn from the past and understand that connection, engagement and human interaction are essential to the attractiveness, sustainability and vitality of a city.

Although the previous chapter focused on the practical implications of public performance art, present throughout this thesis was an underlying intangible concept, greater than the physical manifestations of public art and public performance art: the idea of place, identity and human connection. To highlight this point, the following hypothetical situation is used: after a full day at work, a man embarks on his journey home. Managing and navigating through the hustle and bustle of the hectic commute, earphones in, iPod blaring, his journey of habit allows him to disengage from his

surroundings as his body resorts to auto-pilot. Laura Levin, author of “Can the City Speak? Site-Specific Art and Poststructuralism” refers to this phenomenon as “environmental unconscious ... the aspects of environment that we habitually engage but routinely overlook” (Levin, 250, 2009). Suddenly, the man comes upon a crowd of individuals all gazing at the same thing: a group of performers in an urban square. He does not know immediately what is happening or what the cause for this outlandish sight is, but he stops anyway, takes out his earphones and watches. He notices the other spectators, the location of the performance and the movement of the dancers. Perhaps he lingers, perhaps he puts his earphones back in and leaves almost immediately, yet for that moment, his environmental consciousness was restored as he shared an experience with numerous other city individuals, noticing “as if for the first time, the world we have always had about us but ignored” (Kaprow 2003, 9).

In an ongoing effort to provide resonance, engagement, and meaning to city inhabitants, public performance art is a suitable artistic mechanism that can enliven a space, tell a story, or add beauty. Public performance art also democratizes the staid roles of “performer” and “audience”. These live events are not so much concerned with the “ideal relationship” (Cameron 2010) between performer and audience but provide a democratized view of art that naturally exists in the daily lives of all, not concerned with labels or classifications, i.e. artist, performer, spectator, etc., but facilitates the purest form of connection; no physical barriers, no digitized communication, just one human in the presence of another human; engaged, connected, and present.

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