

## Art, Nature, and City in the Construction of Contemporary Public Space

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**Abstract :** We believe that in the majority of the "recent production of public space", the overvaluation of the "image", of the "ephemeral" and of the "objectual", has come to determine the configuration of banal and (more or less) arbitrary "public spaces", mostly linked to a problem of "outdoor decoration", reflecting a clear sign of uncertainty and arbitrariness about the meaning, the role and shape of public space and public art. This "inconsistency" which is essentially linked to the loss of urban, but also social, cultural and political, vocation of the disciplines that "shape" the urban space (but is also linked to the lack of urban and technical culture of technicians and policy makers) converted a significant set of the recently built "public space" and "urban art" into diffuse and multi-referenced pieces, which generally shares the inability of conferring to the urban space, civic, aesthetic, social and symbolic meanings. In this sense we consider it is essential to undertake a theoretical reflection on the values, the meaning(s) and the shape(s) that open space, and urban art may (or must) take in the current urban and cultural context, in order to redeem for public space its status of significant physical reference, able to embody a spatial and urban identity, and simultaneously enable the collective accession and appropriation of public space. Taking as reference public space interventions built in the last decade on the European context, we will seek to explore and defend the need of considering public space as a true place of exception, an exceptional support where the emphasis is placed on the quality of the experience, especially by the relations public space/urban art can established with the city, with nature and geography in a broad sense, referring us back to a close and inseparable and timeless relationship between nature and culture.

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