

Public Art as Social Critique to Shape Urban-Scape

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Abstract : Public art may be regarded as a social agenda. It is assumed that public art acts as an intermediate form that contributes significantly to community resurgence. That is, public art may be regarded as a verb/process or social intervention. It functions as a vanguard form, attacking boundaries and providing a sensibility for social strategy. Public art in tradition is generally expected to bring aesthetic pleasure to public. Contemporary public art, however, not only focuses on art installation, but it also often offers a process that aims to comment on, question, and challenge the socio-cultural status quo. During the last few decades, accelerated changes in the values and expectations brought to bear on varied urban issues, together with the destruction of the hegemony of traditional art and of museum authorities, has begun to contribute to freer and more democratic representations of public art. It is said that part of a public artwork's role is to ruffle sacred feathers. In many cases, public art is created to address the dynamic social contradictions and mutability of public life; and artists and community participants approach public art from a variety of social critical perspectives and methodologies. Urban issues, such as social and environmental justice, health problems, violence, and political statements, provide plentiful source materials that fuel the performance of public art in many different settings. Further, public artworks have been extensively adopted to express social identity, make political statements, and/or to remedy social and environmental crises. Many murals on urban walls, for instance, reflect social conflicts and address civic rights, and these projects are usually the work of artists who though denied access to traditional gallery and museum channels are supported by community engagement and involvement. Public art as a social practice challenges the traditional western view of artistic practice. Art in the public realm creates a new media that provides a platform for a dialogical exchange between diverse social groups. It seems that public art has evolved as an arena for activism that addresses wide-ranging and highly controversial social issues and civilian concerns. The findings of this study indicate that public artworks are capable of playing a role of activist in facilitating community evolution via social progress.

Keywords : aesthetics, community regeneration, city development, publicness, public participation, social progress

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