

A. Remesar (ed)

Waterfronts of Art I



Art for
social
facilitation

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*Contests over social memory
in waterfront Vancouver:
Historical editing &
obfuscation through public art*

Abstract

Every public art site has a relationship to the history of surrounding areas whether in obscuring social memory or in highlighting certain relationships and events over others. Over the last decade, much of central Vancouver's waterfront, particularly around False Creek (a marine inlet), has been redeveloped with international capital - much of which has been linked to Hong Kong. Several large redevelopment areas have involved close cooperation in urban design processes between 'the city' and 'the developer'. In these megaprojects, public art has emerged as a more substantial and stable urban amenity while becoming less overtly ideological and associated with democratic public space. In this part of North America, such relatively public art projects have become almost iconographic for economic and social changes associated with globalization. Contentious historical information has tended to be censored - particularly around a range of non-European communities and events over the last century involving social conflict. In the same period, outdoor art has been increasingly used as a part of strategies to reclaim public space and attempts to democratize it. These two kinds and functions of public art have tended to be used for divergent experiences of the relationships of history to the present, of public space and the existence of and responses to social conflict, and of 'sense of place'. Six public art sites, with four built, along the north shore of False Creek, in central Vancouver, are analyzed in terms of their cultural, urban and spatial politics and, in particular, in terms of contemporary tensions around the extent of aboriginal presence before and after the arrival of Europeans, the multiracial and multicultural origins and character of the city, contamination with toxic chemicals, violence against women, and the AIDS pandemic. A method for better analyzing the cultural politics of public art sites (and the design processes that were central to their creation) is outlined along with a framework for considering sites with a broader mosaic with a sort of (cultural) landscape ecology.

Certain newer cities such as Vancouver put as much if not more of their resources in public art into obliterating and obscuring reminders of social memory than in more carefully highlighting diverse experiences. In comparison to other cities of its size (2

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million), Vancouver has a relatively low number of public art sites though the costs for many of the newer works, especially those associated with redevelopment involving 'off-shore' capital, are relatively high. In this paper, I discuss some of the mechanisms at work around the functions of public art in city-owned spaces in central Vancouver. I also reflect on being a member, appointed by City Council in early 1999, of the City of Vancouver Public Art Committee.

Problem statement:

Analyzing the specific functions of public art works in urban space

Like many at this conference, I believe that in the present period, public art has a direct impact on the texture of public spaces and their use¹. I have travelled to Barcelona from Vancouver to explore the follow ideas through six sites, four of which have complete public art projects with two other works perhaps a year or two away from construction.

1. social memory is contentious - Social memory in the city is always contentious and interpretations, editing, and censoring of information on particular social groups, experiences, and events take place on an ongoing basis².

2. public art is increasingly being commodified - In periods such as ours with intensifying globalization, public space is increasingly linked to commodified amenities and is marketed. Public art in a neighbourhood is an increasingly attractive marketing accessory especially for housing of and services for groups associated with information-based economic sectors.

3. social memory is problematic for large-scaled redevelopment - In information and service-oriented 'neighbourhood' economies, being rapidly transformed by global capital, the functions of social memory are particularly contentious. Memory is usually found to have a relationship to questions of the legitimacy and social costs of the redevelopment (as well as the intrusion of global capital) and because of the pressures to maximize investment returns.

4. site planning as cultural editing - Public art directly affects the 'sense of place' of public spaces and, therefore, has a direct relationship to modes of access to information on local histories. The establishment of a few piece of public art invariably re-edits and re-interprets the history of a particular neighbourhood³

1. Miles, Malcolm. 1997. Art, space and the city: Public art and urban futures. London: Routledge.

2. M. Christine Boyer. 1996. The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainment. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

3. Dolores Hayden. 1995. The Power of Place: Urban landscapes as public history, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press.

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privileging some details and ignoring or actively obscuring others.

5. public art invariably is historicized - Any work of public art has a relationship to, whether overt or covert, to the history of a particular site and neighbourhood. A work of public art will typically have either an allied or adversarial relationship with an interpretation of local history.

6. where there is relatively less public art additions in some cities additional works engender more conflict - In relatively recent cities, established in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the relationship to previous cultures is particularly contentious. Symbols and coding, no matter how innocuous, tend to be sources of civic controversy.

7. the role of public art becomes more important where natural landscapes are destroyed - Where natural icons have become obliterated or obscured through redevelopment and densification, the role of public art in both sense of urban place and the marketing of real estate becomes more important.

8. resistance to certain public memory manifests in attempts to censor public art - In such newer cities as Vancouver, conflict is often centred on resistance to allowing and 'making space' for a particular memory, historical interpretation, or cultural assertion of a particular social group.

Social Memory in The Terminal City

Since its inception in 1886, as the western depot of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Vancouver has also been known 'The Terminal City'⁴. Initially, a highly multiracial and multicultural town, with three major languages spoken, English, Chinook, and Cantonese (as well as the Salish dialects of the indigenous towns), Vancouver came, in the early twentieth century, to try to reinvent itself as a more anglocentric and avowedly neocolonial enclave than it was initially. In reinventing itself, acknowledgement of social memory that contrasted with the revised civic identity was a serious taboo.

Even today, one of the few artists who has made any headway in situating, let alone confronting, (neo)colonial legacies is Stan Douglas. Raised and still based in Vancouver, today Douglas is one of the most celebrated contemporary artists on earth. His 1999

4. Patricia E. Roy. 1976. The preservation of peace in Vancouver: The aftermath of the anti-Chinese riots of 1887. BC Studies 31: 44 - 59. See p. 44.

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mid-career retrospective, curated by Daina Augaitis, began at the Vancouver Art Gallery and is now travelling⁵ with a substantial catalogue⁶. In addition, a superb book on Douglas was recently published as part of Phaidon's series on contemporary artists⁷. This solo show by Douglas at the VAG was a milestone. Two of the four pieces say much about the conflicted nature of culture in post-lotus-land West Coast. The 6,50 minute 1997 video, *Nu·tka·*, takes us back to the end of the eighteenth century and the confrontation between Spanish and British 'explorers' and the Mowachaht Confederacy on the northwestern coast of Vancouver Island. Two paranoid sea captains from the opposing empires babble while shifting views of the landscape go from blurred to focused. In the accompanying stills, Douglas uncovers clues to unresolved historical tensions in the cultural landscape. But the images of contemporary forest clearcuts are disappointingly understated. Though Douglas has said that *Nu·tka·* is about 'unrepresentability'⁸, this piece also functions to pick apart contemporary takes on the land and nature. In most discussions, there is a disappearance of aboriginals as First Nations. In a year when some of the first treaties in over a century are finally been negotiated on the West Coast, *Nu·tka·* is one of the few works by a non-aboriginal in recognition of the changing political landscape. *Nu·tka·* may well be the most 'paradigmatic' takes on the West Coast landscape since some of Emily Carr's later oil paintings. But the Nootka affair, and the high level of local resistance to imperial intrusion, is an exoticized moment in Canadian history. But as a case of imperial jitters, the confrontation at Nootka was the exception. Curiously, the other location of Anglo-Spanish confrontation, around what would become the British Columbia coast, was Point Grey, the exclusive neighbourhood of Vancouver where Douglas spent his formative years.

Perhaps more indicative of the contentious nature of memory and maps in contemporary Vancouver culture is a more problematic work. Douglas' 1998 video⁹ and graphic presentation, *Win, Place or Show*, is not nearly as successful as *Nu·tka·*, particularly in its pretensions of describing relationships between political economy, culture, and location in Vancouver. In fact, it seems like Douglas wades into a wide range of urban issues then almost purposefully obscures the social coordinates. The description of the piece by Douglas devalues social memory in favour of a discussion of television. Set in the nineteen sixties in a residential tower, that was never built, on the east side of central Vancouver, two dock workers argue in a nearly endless video loop. What undermines the credibility of *Win, Place or Show* is the inclusion of considerable historical data on urban renewal in Vancouver without a specific discussion of race. In

5. Stan Douglas. Vancouver Art Gallery: 27 February to 24 May, 1999; Edmonton Art Gallery: 25 June - 24 August, 1999; The Power Plant, Toronto, 24 September - 21 November, 1999; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 10 December, 2000 - 1 April, 2001.

6. Daina Augaitis (Exhibition Curator). 1999. Stan Douglas (catalogue). Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery.

7. Scott Watson, Diana Thater and Carol Clove (editors / contributors). Stan Douglas. London: Phaidon, 1998.

8. Stan Douglas interview with Diana Thater. Stan Douglas. Scott Watson, Diana Thater and Carol Clove (editors). London: Phaidon, 1998. pp. 8 - 29.

9. *Win, Place or Show*. Produced and directed by Stan Douglas. video 204,023 variations an average of 6 minutes each, 1998.

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this work, Douglas features prominently proposed plans from an infamous University of British Columbia study from 1950¹⁰. Those plans clearly showed western Canada's first black neighbourhood, 'Hogan's Alley'¹¹, obliterated by a series of redevelopment towers. This so called urban renewal was successfully master-minded nearly two decades later by figures such as Trudeau cabinet-advisor Peter Oberlander and ranks as one of the worst assaults on an African Canadian community after Halifax. But with all of the historical pretensions surrounding Win, Place or Show, and with all of the symbolism of an endless loop of two white men fighting, the location of the actual mythic tower was moved to a historically more white block several streets to the north. The resulting 'map' that Douglas constructs, something about sixties television and something about urban renewal in Vancouver without mentioning race, lacks credibility. But it's only television, right? But that was not what the work inferred. Is this work too imprecise to be anything but art? If so, Douglas is calling into question some of the intellectual cache attached to his career. The essays on accompanying catalogue do little to clarify these questions.

False Creek as Vancouver's first public art narrative

Over the last two years, four major new works of public art have been installed along the north side of False Creek in central Vancouver. Two more have been proposed and a number of smaller works have been installed or have been planned. This inlet, that formerly had extensive tidal flats, has been central to centuries of local aboriginal history as well as to the building of early Vancouver. The Musqueam and Squamish cultures experienced the mountains and sea, in what is today greater Vancouver, as a giant bowl. False Creek was particularly important in local cosmologies as the lowest point in that curve, as Skwaychays, 'hole in bottom'¹². The shore became the western terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway and it was here that early neighbourhoods formed such as Kitsilano, Granville Island, Chinatown, and Strathcona with the west's first African-Canadian enclave Hogan's Alley (bulldozed for an expressway in the late nineteen sixties). As industries were built, False Creek became a cesspool that was only cleaned up in the nineteen seventies. Hole-in-Bottom was also the location of Expo 86 and the new neighbourhood of towers that have been built in subsequent years. After government ownership of the former railway lands, for Expo 86, the entire area, a city in itself, was sold to the same Hong Kong-based development company. Dogged by controversy, the redevelopment was forced to cede some outdoor areas for control by a number of City of Vancouver agencies as well as the semi-autonomous Vancouver Parks and

10. Leonard C. Marsh. *Rebuilding a Neighbourhood*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1950.

11. *Hogan's Alley*, Produced and directed by Andrea Fatona and Cornelia Wyngaarden, video, 32:30 minutes, distributed by Video In, Vancouver, 1994.

12. *alone* (Bruce Macdonald. 1992. Vancouver: A Visual History. Vancouver: Talonbooks.



Recreation Board. With so much (multicultural) history and continued pressures for redevelopment and densification, public art and landscape designs along the north side of False Creek are some of the higher profile (and most prone to controversy) west of Toronto. What happens in False Creek says much for the change role of public art in Canada.

Given the costs and controversies that come with this territory, the actual design and construction of these public spaces, with such an emphasis on contemporary art, are achievements in themselves. The three works were funded by developers, Concord Pacific owned by Hong Kong-based Li Kai-shing, through an innovative public arts programme directed by the City of Vancouver. And the Concord Pacific redevelopment project played a key role as a symbolic neoconservative project for a city¹³ with an extensive history of social struggle around inequities and the construction of more responsive social institutions. A contrasting work of public art, more representative of grassroots approaches to public space, is 'Marker for change', the national memorial to the fourteen women murdered in Montréal in December 1989 and was created through many small donations and much volunteer time. These four works represent some of the interests, aesthetics, and conflicts at work in public landscapes with art involving (often tenacious) social memory on the West Coast. These works form an arc, a progression, from intuitive to precise historical experiences and the role of public art from relatively affluent to poor neighbourhoods. Two additional works have yet to be constructed. Near the Marker for Change is the site for the proposed Chinatown place marker which supposedly was to have memorials to Chinese railway workers and veterans. After over a year of meetings with Chinatown business and citizen groups, the future of this unbuilt project is in doubt. At the far western end of this arc is Sunset Beach where the proposed AIDS Memorial has yet to break ground.

1. Marker for Change

We can begin at what was two points separated by a narrow channel, Khiwah'esks, 'separated points'. In Thorton Park, in front of what has been Vancouver's train station for much of this century, is the austere monument to the women who died in the massacres and to other female victims of male violence. Toronto-based Beth Alber designed, and built with a large group of volunteers, Marker For Change. Between the train and bus station and a busy street is a circle of thirteen casket-like benches of pink

13. Katharyne Mitchell. 1996. Visions of Vancouver: Ideology, democracy, and the future of urban development. *Urban Geography* 17(6): 478 - 501.



granite with vulvic indentations. There are donor tiles as well. The park is old with large, sheltering trees. In contrast to the corporate and market-oriented jury that selected the public art to the affluent area to the west of this site, (cultural) politics was more overt in the articulation and selection of Alber's design. A jury of seven women of various backgrounds in the arts and activism, Rosemary Brown, Nicole Brossard, Wilma Needham, Haruko Okama, Doreen Jensen, Maura Gatensby, and Irene Whittome, selected Alber's austere design from 98 entries.

In this, the most impoverished neighbourhood in Canada, with some of the highest levels of violent crime, this park is a battleground between the forces of gentrification and drug-dealing. Some neighbourhood resistance to the Marker for Change project was preoccupied with the fact that the thirteen women named were university students with supposedly high levels of social privilege. With chronic crime in the area, Marker for Change is difficult for many people, particularly women, to visit it individuals and is mainly a site for group observance. In recent months, the Vancouver's Parks Board so reacted to the controversy around the piece, particularly the male backlash to some of the monument's wording, that it announced that it would not allow further public art that might «antagonize»¹⁴ other groups. Why all this reaction about (gendered) social memory in public space? The recent video, Marker for Change: The Story of the Women's Monument¹⁵ begins to explain why. Documenting the small group of organizers over seven years, the video shows how they successfully eschewed the conventional sources of funding. A high point in the discussion is organizer Chris McDowell's statement that the marker was «a gamble on the powers of art.»

Taking seven years, eschewing the conventional sources of funding, and involving over 6,000 donors giving amounts between US\$15 and \$35, Marker for Change was, in the words of organizer Chris McDowell, «a gamble in the powers of art.» Marker for Change was nearly not constructed because of a local campaign of male paranoia and disinformation. As Rosalyn Deutsche argued so aptly in her 1996 Evictions, women and feminist art in particular continue to be evicted from public space¹⁶. After the homophobic backlash around the yet-to-be-built AIDS Memorial, the City of Vancouver Parks Board put in place guidelines that will effectively censor any public reminders of groups which could «antagonize»¹⁷ (more privileged social groups).

14. Todd, Douglas. 1998. Monuments policy toughened. Vancouver Sun (December 11, 1998): A3.

15. Moira Simpson - Director, 58 minutes, Moving Images Distribution, Vancouver, 1998, 1-800-684-3014, mailbox@movingimages.bc.ca

16. Deutsche, Rosalyn. Evictions: art and spatial politics. Chicago: Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts / Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996. pp. 203 - 244.

17. Douglas Todd. 1998. Monuments policy toughened. Vancouver Sun December 11, 1998: A3.

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2. Chinatown place marker

With a deep-seated history of anti-Chinese racism¹⁸, there are few historical references to Chinese history in The Terminal City. This lack of historical acknowledgement of the contributions of Chinese Canadians is probably the most glaring omission of a kind of de facto censorship in the city's public space. After a year of discussions with Chinatown business and community groups, two monuments proposed for Keefer and Columbia, where Chinatown touches False Creek, were postponed by a city in July. This in turn sparked attacks on the city government with implications for the November 1999 elections of the mayor and councillors.

3. Street Light

Moving west to False Creek and then along the shore, we come to one of the more imposing pieces of new public art on the West Coast. Street Light, by Toronto-based Bernie Miller and Alan Tregebov, is a more problematic discussion of local history in contrast to Welcome to the Land of Light. On a two storey constructivist-like scaffolding loom historical photographs, of the surrounding site, transferred on to metal sheets. Some of the sheets are at angles as to produce shadows of the images at certain times of the year. The superb photographs speak of the shift from subsistence aboriginal communities to the early wharf and mill camps that grew into a town called Vancouver. The archive numbers of the photographs are engraved, overly monumentally, in concrete pillars at the base of the scaffolding. Disturbingly, the resolution of the holes in the sheets is so poor as to make most of the images unreadable — particularly for reading faces and discerning many details such as the fact that many of these early Vancouverites had non-European heritages. The excessive reduction of the images in this strategic public space effectively contributes to loss of historical memory. In addition to this dubious abstracting of history, the entire piece blocks key views of the sea for some neighbourhood residents and for pedestrians and bicyclists travelling down the main thoroughfare, Davie Street. Miller and Tregebov have proposed the same kind of work for a number of cities and variety of sites but clearly there is a poorness of fit at this point along False Creek. The cramped and obstructive position of the work on this location violates basic canons of site planning. Not surprisingly, owners of adjacent condominiums angered at the loss of harbour views have gone to court to get Street Light dismantled, contributing further to local history. This work, and the two described directly after it, were 'private' pieces of public art selected in international competitions as part of the Roundhouse

18. Kay S. Anderson. 1991. Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial discourse in Canada 1875 - 1980. Montréal: McGill-Queen's Universities Press.

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Community art programme involving the developer and the City of Vancouver Public Art Program. The same jury selected each work over more than a two year process and consisted of Barry Downs, Concord Pacific representative and project architect; Peter Web, architect and project manager for the developer; Barbara Swift, landscape architect and former Seattle Arts Commission Public Art representative; Anne Ramsden, artist and resident of the historic Strathcona neighbourhood nearby, and Bruce Grenville, then chief curator at Edmonton Art Gallery and now Senior Curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

4. Welcome to the Land of Light

Walking west from Street Light, along the shore, is Henry Tsang's lower budget but more thought-provoking, Welcome to the Land of Light. The Concord developments have high-speed fibre optic connections and Tsang playfully advertises this fact in English and Chinook. A kitsch passage, unabashedly verging on advertizing, follows the railings along the shore in both English and Chinook. A cable below the text emits a light of shifting colours. There is a small sign indicating that Chinook was the trading language, the «lingua franca,» from Alaska to California in the nineteenth century and was a mixture of native languages from Oregon and Vancouver Island along with English and French. Chinook was early West Coast fusion culture. When the trans-Canada railway was completed, less than half of the population of Vancouver was of European heritages. Speakers of Chinook, English and Cantonese were in roughly equal numbers¹⁹.

5. Brush with Illumination

Again walking west along the shore we can view in the harbour the only work in Canada by celebrated Seattle-based environmental artist, Buster Simpson²⁰. His off-shore sculpture, Brush With Illumination, bobs well over a storey above the inlet while giving clues about the wind and tides. A large polished metal rod is buoyed by steel balls. Solar panels power its night lights. The position of the shaft shifts with the tides. The artist statement notes,

«...Brush with Illumination is the evolutionary successor of an ancient communication tool: the calligraphy brush. The pieces is fitted with an array of sensors that glean environmental data from the air and water...and transmit it both visually, through the laser lighted pulsations of the cursor at the tip of the brush, and electronically to a land

19. Charles Lillard with Terry Glavin. A Voice Great Within Us. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1998. newstar@pinc.com

20. Documentation of Simpson's work includes the following: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Hirshhorn WORKS 89: Daniel Buren, Buster Simpson, Houston Conwill, Matt Mullican / Sidney Lawrence, Ned Rifkin, Phyllis Rosenzweig. [Washington, D.C.] : Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1990 & Barbara C. Matilsky. 1992. Buster Simpson urban environmental action. In fragile ecologies: Contemporary artists' interpretations and solutions. (B. C. Matilsky ed.). New York: Rizzoli. pp. 92 - 98.

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based computer. Mathematical functions translate these elemental events into a series of characters that are continually displayed...at www.brushdelux.com.»²¹

Sleek and shiny, the analogies to male anatomy are difficult to dispute. Not simply a «boytoy,» Brush With Illumination functions as a not-so-subtle property marker as the developer's holdings that extend into lucrative water rights.

6. Vancouver AIDS memorial

If there were any doubts about whether there was still homophobic resistance to sexual minorities taking up more public space in Vancouver, the raucous debate in 1996 about the proposed location of the AIDS Memorial confirmed the worst. Organizing for the memorial began in 1995²². A jury that included gay architect Arthur Erickson²³ selected a sixty foot long undulating metal fence²⁴ for a stand of trees Stanley Park near a historic but less current cruising area²⁵. The names of people who had died of AIDS were to be perforated through the metal²⁶. The light from the sea would filter through trees and softly work through the holes in the metal. Soon after the elected Parks Board approved the project with reservations²⁷, the location of the memorial became a major civic issue. The Friends of Stanley Park opposed the location of the memorial with a spokesperson arguing unconvincingly that,

«its not a question of homophobia...its a question of keeping the park in as natural a state as possible.»²⁸

The problem was Stanley Park had been heavily modified since its establishment²⁹. As many as 2,000 people had occupied Khwaykhway on the north side alone of what is today the park, as late as 1862³⁰. Much of the park had been selectively logged from 1866 to 1871³¹ and since has been heavily fragmented by roads. In terms of magnitude of ecological change, a thin sheet of metal would have had a negligible impact. But some homophobes might have found some of the new visitors to the memorial to be 'unnatural'. After such abuse of the ecosystems of Stanley Park, it is bizarre the «line in the sand» around better protection was drawn around a proposed sheet of metal with the names of people who had died of AIDS³². Ironically, there was a reconstruction of the nature versus the people conflict of a century ago³³. The people to be evicted, this time, were not First Nations nor the poor but rather sexual minorities.

21. 1999. Private development projects. Panorama Public Art Newsletter (City of Vancouver) 9: 5.

22. Kevin Griffin. 1995. AIDS memorial in planning stage. Sun (August 3, 1995): B3 & Paula Gustafson. 1995. AIDS memorial planning under way. Sun (September 7, 1995) 54: 11.

23. Sylvain Bombardier. 1996. Fragment of queer archisexualities. pp. 50, 54 - 56.

24. The design team for the AIDS Memorial design (and location) was composed of Bruce Wilson, Susanna Barrett and Mark Tessler.

25. One of the only discussions that even mentioned the issues of AIDS memorials and cruising, and this was only obliquely, was Francisco Ibañez-Carrasco. 1997. Forgetting AIDS: Memorial bric-a-brac. MIX: The Magazine of Artist-run Culture (Toronto)(Spring 1977): 33 - 35. Page 35 has some of the only site analysis of the proposed memorial suggesting a minimal ecological impact thought a significant visual / circulation impact.

26. Artseen. 1996. Vancouver AIDS Memorial Project. Artichoke (Vancouver) (Summer 1996): 8 - 9.

27. Petti Fong. 1996. Stanley Park AIDS memorial to bear 2,000 names. Sun (November 6, 1996): B3.

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At this second fin-de-siècle of the park as a social institution — almost as a form of

mediation, it was the factually misguided environmentalists, who conjured the spectre of queer hoards. With all of the denials of the Parks Commissioners, most notably by gay politician Duncan Wilson homophobia³⁴ was largely behind this latent interest in the carrying capacity of Stanley Park. But there was little specific discussion of ecological impacts. Supporters of the monument and the first proposed location were soon wondering why a small, thin memorial was being targeted in a park with serious environmental degradation³⁵. In addition, there was an effective equation of AIDS with homosexuality in the park with little sensitivity for the trajectory of the pandemic³⁶ towards IV drug users, heterosexual women, and First Nations.

The problem was that the preferred site, in Ceperley Park, was originally proposed by the designers was not adequately reviewed by the AIDS Memorial Project (VAMP) and posed some serious difficulties. None of the individuals on the winning team had much serious experience with site planning especially in working in natural areas. The jury was not better prepared for blending a concept and a design with an already existing place — especially in an area well-established for conflicts involving gay men, police, and bashers. Aside from a handful of exceptions, most notably the UBC Anthropology Museum, high modernist Erickson was better known for obliterating the naturalness and sense of place of sites rather than working with them. The original site proposed was adjacent to a parking lot and a major road that often sees successions of large tourist tour buses. This is not an intimate space for grieving. The closest public transportation is currently four blocks away. While the sixty foot screen could have been undulated around trees, it was unclear whether the non-native trees would have to had to have been cut. The long memorial would have disrupted circulation, created an effective barrier in an area which is also highly vulnerable to bashing. But with all of these problems and even with the prospects of having to cut down a few young and non-native trees, the memorial would not have had any significant negative impact on natural habitat. The one major ecological change from the memorial would have been to bring in more people to the park - many of whom are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered and whom are increasingly interested in asserting their presence in a park that is iconographic of the shift from underground to activist queer spaces.

After a telephone poll³⁷ organized by a conservative television station — a week before the November 1996 municipal election³⁸, the Parks Park, voted to withdraw support for the location of the memorial³⁹. In backing down from support for Stanley Park location

28. Anne Sullivan. 1996. Friends oppose monument in park. Vancouver Courier (October 30, 1996): 12.

29. Since its establishment, the Stanley Park has seen road and trail building, a suspension bridge and expressway, considerable trimming and thinning of native vegetation, establishment of a largely non-native species botanical garden, green houses, a zoo, an aquarium, various dining and concession facilities, swimming pools. William Carey McKee. 1976. The History of the Vancouver Park System 1886 - 1929. MA Thesis in History, University of Victoria. on file, University of Victoria MacPherson Library, SB485 V33M2. See pp. 36 - 38.

30. Bruce Macdonald. 1992. Vancouver: A Visual History. Vancouver: Talonbooks. See p. 16.

31. *ibid.*, pp. 14 - 15.

nr 2,

Jan. 2000

32. Clint Burnham. 1997. Fuck nature. *Boo* (Vancouver) 10: 4 - 7. Se p. 6.

33. Robert A. J. McDonald. 1984. 'Holy retreat' or 'practical breathing spot'? : Class perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 1910 - 1913. *Canadian Historical Review* LXV (2): 128 - 153.

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for the memorial, the chairman of the Board noted that

«Stanley Park is a place with almost spiritual resonance to Vancouver,»⁴⁰ and then effectively evicted the memorial from the park. The Board caved in to a notion that a memorial to people who had died in STD-related pandemic, or perhaps the survivors, were less spiritual. Even the two members of the Parks Board from the leftish COPE bowed to pressures to change the location in favour of public hearings⁴¹. In the subsequent week, neither of these individuals were not reelected. Within many networks of West End gay males there emerged considerable antipathy towards Park Board members, especially the gay and lesbian members, who backed down⁴². After the controversy died down, the Parks Board worked hard to appear to have not caved in to homophobia. In large part because of the criticism that the Parks Board might have been swayed by homophobia, it commissioned guidelines for proposing any new public art in Stanley Park⁴³. By mid-1997, VAMP was again proposing the Ceperley Park site, with its mottled light filtered through lovely and non-native woodland — a site whose ecological integrity was compromised long before the proposal of an additional of thin sheet of metal. And consistent with the new guidelines, three other, far less visually powerful sites were then considered⁴⁴. Finally, in June of 1998, Sunset Beach, a bare space a half a kilometre east along False Creek from the Stanley Park site was approved - over the objections of hundreds of homophobic residents⁴⁵. But within months of the site being allocated for the memorial it has also been made a leashless dog run area with the small and exposed site affording virtually no privacy for grieving.

Analysis:

Over-edited collective memories as underdevelopment

Vancouver has never had a comprehensive public art plan the way have some cities in western North America⁴⁶. In such a review gaps in the civic narrative could be identified and confronted more directly. If we go back along False Creek the public art there, and not there, indicates social priorities, hostilities, and the effectiveness of certain social alliances over others. The women's Marker for Change is still perceived by many in the neighbourhood as being preoccupied with university students when poor women, die from violence (directed at women), every week. While there were some late design interventions to bring in community organizations, the casket-like seats remain a statement in relationship to the 1989 tragedy.

34. Ted Townsend. 1996. AIDS memorial belongs in park. *West Ender* (November 14, 1996): 10. Also see Gareth Kirkby's 1998 review of continuing homophobia in the siting of the memorial in his editorial, «Why I support Sunset Beach West.» *Xtra West* 119: 7.

35. One of the Stanley Park groups involved stated that 'Lifeforce hopes that we may all realize that we can remember one has left us by walking through Stanley Park Forest habitat'. (Janet Smith. 1996. Supporters debate AIDS memorial sites. *West Ender* (November 14, 1996): 2).

36. «Lifeforce,» one of the major groups against the location of the memorial in Stanley Park, seems to have had a vague «deep ecology» philosophy — one that at times had incorporated elements of homophobia and AIDSphobia (Michael E. Zimmerman. 1994. *Contesting Earths Future: Radical ecology and modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 168).

37. Miro Cernetig. 1996. An AIDS memorial in Stanley Park. *Globe and Mail* (November 15, 1996): A25.

38. Cam Cathcart. 1996. Late controversy for park board. *West End Times* (November 15, 1996): 6.

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The Chinatown place marker, with two long-overdue monuments, is not even designed and could be fully cancelled. And this was not a particularly inspiring site within Chinatown to begin with. In deed, another decade could go by where people are still trying to decide what to highlight and where to illuminate the history of this Chinatown. The Street Light reproductions of early photographs of the area, are so abstracted as to obscure the multiracial / cultural origins of the city. The scaffolding blocks a key view in the city and supposedly detracts from some apartment views at a time with real estate values in the city remain low in the aftermath of the so-called 'Asian flu'. Tsang's piece with Chinook effectively advertizes the installation of a fibre cable attractive to people. The Buster Simpson piece is the major environmental piece of an important urban body of water but there is little information on how these ecosystems have been polluted and mismanaged. In this sense, Brush with Illumination effectively obscures the issue of toxic waste in False Creek. And the AIDS Memorial, if it is built, will be crammed into a narrow site offering little space for grieving. While these four pieces and the siting and design processes for the unbuilt two works involve memory, today there is as much forgetting, editing, and censoring in Vancouver's public art as there are new information and experiences being brought to light.

Conclusions:

Strategies for more openly discussing the role of public art in community memory

As a relatively 'leftish' appointee to the City of Vancouver's Public Art Committee, coming in 1999, I have been particularly concerned with social infrastructure questions far more than the centrist block that governs the city. I have looked at public art and spaces of memory in terms of infrastructure and facilities and am now participating in a subcommittee to consider options for on outdoor art space - a series of spaces and neighbourhood amenities engendering more communitarianism than discrete 'sculpture parks'. This art park could function to allow even more public memory to be articulated.

While I will be continuing to explore the points that I made at the beginning of this discussion, there is no effective monopoly on Vancouver's public memory nor open spaces. Interpretation of Vancouver's rich historical memories will remain contentious with differences around the extent and kind of public space remaining volatile. It remains difficult to bring up these issues of history, memory, and space. And until there are new spaces and art works, programmed and designed for such communitarian reflection

39. Karen Gram. 1996. Parks board sets aside approval for AIDS project. Sun (November 9, 1996): A1 & Sherryl Yeager. 1996. Stanley Park AIDS wall: Row still simmering. Province (November 10, 1996): 8.

40. *ibid.*

41. Petti Fong. 1996. Memorial's location up to public. Sun (November 12, 1996): B3.

42. Bill Richardson. 1996. Park Board's several rankles. Georgia Straight (November 14 - 21, 1996): 20.

43. Janet Smith. AIDS memorial plan waits for report. West Ender (January 23, 1997): 3; Janet Smith. 1997. Monumental debate. West Ender (March 13, 1997): 1, 4 & Cam Cathcart. 1997. Park board gives ok to guidelines. West End Times (March 14, 1997): 2.

44. Gareth Kirkby. 1997. Still top of the list. Xtra West (July 10, 1997) 102: 9

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(and disorientation), the partial memories, some very weak, will continue to dominate a city struggling with its identity and mixed, and very unresolved, legacies.

45. Janet Smith. 1998. Angry seniors stalk out of AIDS memorial meeting. Westender (June 18, 1998): 8 & Tom Yeung. Top 10 reasons for an AIDS Memorial at Sunset Beach as heard at the Jun[e] 15 public meeting. Xtra West 127 (June 25, 1998): 11.

46. Place debate. 1996. Revisiting the Phoenix Public Art Plan. Place (New York) 10(3): 52 - 63.

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The possibility, for different reasons, of rendering grounds available for urban use is in the basis of the development of the operations of the urban renovation of waterfronts and, particularly, old harbour zones.

Resulting from specific economic and spatial contexts, deriving from aspects regarding their hinterland, their country/region or the international context of maritime transportation, harbour zones verify thus their own development dynamic, defining needs, surpluses or land restriction in the administration of their activities.

The process of urban renovation of harbour zones has its origin in the 1960s, in North America, being the operations of the Inner Harbour, in Baltimore, and the Downtown Waterfront, in Boston, the more well-known.

In the 1970s this process spread to Europe through some operations in the United Kingdom, being the renovation of Liverpool the pioneer and the operation of London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), already in the 1980s, a paradigm.

These operations serve as an example for the European realisations that followed; cities like Rotterdam, Barcelona, Genova, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Oslo, Helsinki, Duisburg, Lisbon, among others, have developed their own programmes of waterfronts renovation, seeking a greater urban integration.

A global urban planning process is defined this way, which is based on the emergence, in the 1960s, of a new economic context: the de-industrialisation of the period called post-fordism, the change in the world oceanic routes and specific changes in maritime transport, resulting from the normalisation of container transportation.

The world generalisation of the use of containers had as a consequence the development of ships having a larger dimension and depth, rendering obsolete the less deep or older inner docks.

As a result harbours had to create new docks that were deeper, more modern and provided with the specific technology for the effective operation of this system.

Simultaneously, harbour platforms become logistic platforms instead of a mere point of arrival.

They become dependent on great industrial surfaces and adjacent warehouse facilities and on the integration into a multimodal transport system, obligatorily a railway system linking to their hinterland, preferentially also integrated into a high-speed railway system and near an airport.

