



**National College of Art & Design;  
Faculty of Fine Art  
Department of Sculpture.**

# **Public Art Beyond the Discernment of the Public Sphere**

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## Introduction

This dissertation is designed to assess and resolve the problems of public art in contemporary society. This issue is problematic due to numerous assertions as to what is meant by public and what is meant as art in relation to the public and private sphere. Socialism (and to some degree capitalism) is the main impetus for this discussion as it is here that art and the public collide yet no resolution is actually offered. The following comments highlight some of the issues that are to be discussed;

The social struggle is breaking down class distinctions; the intelligent outcast of today is tomorrow's millionaire. Nothing opposes the rise of the proletariat in the modern state and he brings his lack of culture with him into his high sphere. The man who has no aesthetic stimulus in his period of development will, as a rule, have no lofty requirements when chance has made him an influential member of the community though he may stimulate these, and so add a new source of error to those already present. (Meire-Graefe, Julius, in, Frascina, J., & Harrison, (eds.), p.207).

Does not Marxism destroy the creative mood? Yes, it does. It definitely destroys the creative moods that are feudal, bourgeois, petty bourgeois, liberalistic, nihilistic, art for art's sake, aristocratic, decadent, or pessimistic, and every other creative mood that is alien to the masses of the people and the proletariat. So far as proletarian writers and artists are concerned, should not these kinds of creative moods be destroyed? I think they should; they should be utterly destroyed, and while they are being destroyed, something new can be constructed. (Mao Tse Tung, in, Laing, David, p.76)

The idea of 'mass audience' often has negative connotations because it is frequently assumed that an item that appeals to millions must represent the lowest common denominator of taste. (Walker, John A., p.18)

These quotations are an intrinsic part of the introduction because together they can explain some of the implications of public art and



contemporary art practice. The first statement by Julius Meier-Graefe highlights that art is nonexclusive to the dominant social and economic classes (an established member of society may have little understanding of art compared to a person from the so called dominated class). Statement two by Chairman Mao, explains what Marxism and art can produce when strictly related Mao pinpoints some elements that are destroyed by Marxist theory. This in turn portrays Marxism as nothing more than censorship. Neither the artist or the audience has the prerogative to maintain limitations for art. The points extracted from Mao shall be discussed with reference to the implications of a mass audience and the language of art. The crucial elements this theses attempts to acknowledge is that art is a language and that different levels of fluency are required throughout society in order for art to exist as art. The level of fluency or understanding by the artist and also by the audience determines the quality of the art. Statement three by John A Walker, with reference to fine art and mass media dictates that art that is publicly accessible, must consist of the lowest common denominator of taste. thereby assuming that the larger the area that art tries to spread itself the quicker the downward transition through the hierarchy of visual quality. The language must therefore be difficult to access in order to maintain the status quo .

One major factor that has progressed or evolved in response to art practice is that of the gallery. It must be clarified to what extent the gallery is able to dictate the nature of art, the quality of art and the audience for art. The gallery has created a void that has isolated art from society. Consequently, art that leaves the understood context of the gallery and into a public sphere (the plaza,





park, forecourt and other public service areas) has to be valued the following questions must be asked:

What is the validity of art in the public sphere?

What are the distinctions between public and audience?

What are the implications of public art to :

(a) the public?

(b) the art world? Who are the benefactors to this art?

What are the social, economic and political issues?

Has art anything to offer the public?

What are the consequences of a mass audience as seen in relation to communism?

How important is the gallery to the practice of art?

These are just a few key issues concerning public art that must be answered before the actual role of art in the public sphere can be valued. It shall be with such answers that the hypothesis : 'public art does not exist and cannot exist as art until the role of the public ceases whereby art is only answerable and judged according to the aesthetic standards the art world establishes at any given period. The question 'what is art' can be systematically answered in relation to contemporary society and the validity of theory in relation to art.



## Chapter 1.

## **Art and Society:**

*.... one need not be afraid to produce daring, unusual things for the proletariat so long as they deal with its real situation. There will always be people of culture, connoisseurs of art, who will interject: 'ordinary people do not understand that.' But the people will push these persons impatiently aside and come to a direct understanding with the artists.*  
(Brecht,Bertolt,in,Frascina,f., &Harrison, (eds.),p.230).

Public art divides itself between that which is public and that which is art; whether it is art occupying a public sphere or whether it is a construction satisfying the wants of the public or articulating the language of art. The argument depends on the definition of the public in reference to that of art. Ideally, the public is quite insignificant as opposed to the audience, which is the percentage of the public that actively responds to the art work. The term public naturally assumes an infinite, uncharacteristic audience. Basically the audience is an embodiment of people relative to art, who are capable of receiving and interpreting ideas and information (visual, literary, sound etc.) logically. Understanding is acknowledged and the process of communication is ideally attained. It is this theory of communication that sustains the theory of public art being unable to exist in contemporary society due to the absence of a receiving body. It is the language of art, that makes art so inaccessible to the general public. The parties involved in this communication are reliant on each other; the artist is the communicator, the audience is the receiver of the communication, and the art work is the means of communication. If no audience exists, then there is no reception and consequently the artist ceases to exist and also the art work. This approach may appear extreme and surely communication can exist





between the artist and the art but, as it shall be divulged later, something that is unseen has no presence and theoretically does not exist.

This ideal model of the existence of art not just public art is very subtly balanced. Each element requires opposing the other two equally in order for the cycle to be complete. Again the artist exists as an artist because of his/her art, yet the art can only exist because of the artist and consequently the audience. The audience that develops from the emergence of art must have an initial understanding of the language of art. The language is the information given and the history that has led to that information. The congealing of the three elements allows for the existence of art. Ironically, the transition from private art to public art can only ever isolate the public rather than include it. The art does not attempt to involve the public in any sort of discourse due to the fact that the language of art is not accessible to large percentages of the assumed public; consequently this breakdown in communication leads to the dissolution of the audience, the artist and art itself.

Art can either be true to itself, art for art's sake, thereby negating large portions of an external community (in this case the public in general), or, the artist and consequently the art can work accordingly to the directives laid down by the public or by the powers that control the public; hence the extent that the art remains 'art'. Such compromises need to be ascertained as well as the evaluation of art's role in society.

To proceed from this point, aware of the elements that determine art, art cannot succeed as art in a society that attempts to control what art can and cannot be, in a society that determines the public



for art. Thus, art under the dictatorship of Marxist teachings can offer little in the way of art because the objective is not art but propaganda. The Marxist or socialist era of the twentieth century, especially in eastern Europe and Russia, attempted to redirect the role of art in society whereby art was created for the proletariat and as such the masses. What value is there for mass art? Largely the proletariat had a low standard of education so any art that was produced, had to be accessible to the masses which therefore meant the language had to be rectified to a lower standard and built upon at a rate attained by all. This art dealt with fact and ideals. The role of the artist was in jeopardy, he was becoming a craftsman, labourer or servant to the powers that control the masses. "...The production of art is the history of ruling class visual ideologies..." (Hadjinicolaou, Nico, in Frascina, f., & Harrison, (eds.) p.207). Such statements uphold the myths and assumptions of what art actually is - implying that art is the prerogative of the ruling social class. However art has never isolated itself away from any public. It is only through understanding and discernment of the complex language of art that one is capable of being part of the audience for art instead of a passive body. The public must therefore be at fault for the disparity between the art and the public. Hadjinicolaou is correct to assume that art is the history of the ruling class visual ideology, as far as the class distinction is not a social one but is based upon the fluency of visual intelligence. Leon Trotsky states "...the separation of art from aspects of social life was the result of class structure society..." (Frascina, f., & Harrison, (eds.) p.209.) Art has not separated itself from society the public has separated itself from art. It is quite a noble idea of communism to anticipate a complete audience- one

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that incorporates all the public-and still allows for pure art. This egalitarian society can not work because it requires the audience to progress at the same ratio as the art and the artist. Art is the physical representation of mental process and communism defeats individuality and creativity. The artist is unable to advance anywhere beyond the ineligibility of the public, thus creating the scenario either everyone is an an artist or no-one is an artist.

Art needs to be redefined. It has to be based on conceptual ideology rather than just physical ideology and it is here that there lies the disparity between the public and those that create. Even Marx could not have been part of the society that he attempted to create. His own resources set him apart from the masses and in the same way the artist is separate from the masses otherwise art could never exist. It is the distinction that allows art to be read as creation. Therefore, if art is to be a public tool or utensil the role of the artist is negated and as argued previously, if the artist /communicator ceases so does the audience and the art. An audience would therefore dictate another means of communication and another source. Mass manufacture would undoubtedly replace art in a controlled society. If art and the public can cooperate, then why is the public necessary? Basically if there was no public it would become impossible for any audience to exist either. The audience exists because of its distinction from the public.

...Art, it is said is not a mirror, but a hammer. It does not reflect it shapes...

(Trotsky,Leon,inFracina,f., &Harrison, (eds.)p.209).

In modern society, art does not reach as many people as it would have done fifty or one hundred years ago. Certain groups within

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society still refer greatly to contemporary art and the art is still as influential or uninfluential as it ever was, but in general, mass media communication is carving its pathway into the structure of society. Culture is currently dominated, not by the fine arts but by the mass media. Fine art has lost its social function and accordingly its hammering power, all due to the language of art being dissolved in contemporary society. The trickle down effect from fine art used to be into all parts of society, notably industry, science, education, design and many more have been reduced to a meagre dribble. The public and potential audience has depleted since the technological revolution; People are comforted by their complacency; the language of television and popular culture is immediately accessible and understandable.

Due to this trend, public art has been systematically eradicated and what is left is situated in a void or "no man's land" between the ideology of the public and the ideology of the artist and art world. Public art has had to redefine its own ideology; Who or What is the work being produced for? Karl Marx defined art as a mere product and a product becomes a product only through being consumed. Is it not this inability to consume that creates the disparity? Marx's ideals are quite problematic, he has totally disintegrated any art. Hypothetically, if there are no consumers there is no art, yet the consumers Marx refers to even if it were to be consumed there would still be no art (the public dictating what is art leads not to art but to manufacture). The belief in a pure art -one that exists beyond any external forces other than what exists between the art and the artist, e.g. the market; visual or financial- may be as theoretically unfounded as pure Marxism, (e.g. to understand equality it is





necessary for inequality). Furthermore, Marxism insists on the equality between production and the elements that enable production. For instance the production of materials that enable the artist to carry out his/her work -paints, brushes, tools etc.-are of equal importance to the creation of the artist. Such attitudes deny the element of creativity; art is based on subjectivity not objectivity. The art has the potential to exist well before it is actually realised . With *Public* art the artist can be no more than a tool of production, a tool similar to that described by Marx. Public art is expressionless. They are artistic ideas, worked upon to best please the prevailing powers rather than the artist and the ideology of art, thus accommodating the agenda of the commissioning body. Moreover the intended public usually has little say about the art that is destined to invade their space.

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The previous chapter leads to the question: where should art actually be seen? According to Daniel Buren "...The museum or gallery constitutes the mystical body of art...", thus, exemplifying the significance of the gallery to contemporary art practice. The gallery has thus become the aesthetic market for art and it has evolved to the extent that the gallery is equally as 'loaded' as the art that is shown. Contemporary galleries constitute a sealed existence away from any external factors, thus becoming a white, timeless cube preserving the disparity between art and the public. The transition of the gallery from a common space to an ideological backdrop, offers more to the isolation of art because it also acts as a physical barrier between art and the public. The public, to some degree feels intimidated even to enter the haven of the gallery, thus depleting the potential audience.

Artists need to be completely aware of the ideology of the gallery; the gallery has a history as distinct as the art shown in it. This influential back drop can affect the context and even meaning of the art. Art and the gallery run parallel to each other, it may even be described as parasitic, but it is this relationship that elevates art to the rank of art. The art creates the gallery, (i.e. as art is displayed publicly the ideology of the gallery is instituted), and the gallery maintains the status of art. If either of these two institutions fails, the cycle and calibre of art fails. Public art attempts to knock or diffuse the status quo without any convictions, consequently eliminating the audience through fragmentation of the gallery ideology (by breaching the gallery walls the audience becomes indistinct). Later



it shall be concluded that art in the public sphere, beyond the walls of any physical gallery needs to be firmly fixed to the ideology of the gallery in order to maintain the status of art. Usually, the work loses the parameters of art as it adheres to the ideology of the external forces, namely finance on the part of the artist. Can pieces of work in the public sphere ever be recognised as art without the gallery? Can art ever be read as just art especially in relation to a public? Art in the public sphere relies on the surroundings, the people or the architecture and even art in the gallery has to be discussed with reference to the gallery. Art has never really been autonomous. The pristine, clinical, white cube that has similar impact to a medieval cathedral, attempts to secure art in a timeless capsule, yet the capsule itself has become an integral part of what contemporary art means. The gallery, by attempting to isolate the art from the public or that which goes beyond the gallery ideology, merely reinforces the fact that there is a distinction between public and private and, if something is one then it can not be the other. Art is a private pursuit.

The gallery imposes a frame on everything that is exhibited within. The audience is duly preselected; tastes, preferences and visualities are pre-evaluated; visual and verbal interaction is almost guaranteed. All this without any physical action on the gallery's part. Art that forsakes this sanctuary and opts for a public sphere as the exhibiting arena must be aware that once the art goes beyond the now traditional "white cube", no audience is assured only assumed. It is virtually impossible to have an inclination of the aesthetic values of this new audience unless the artist is firstly a member of the public he wishes to



On the 1st of June 1864, the first of the  
series of experiments was conducted, and the  
results were as follows:—  
The first experiment was conducted with a  
view to determine the effect of the  
temperature of the water on the rate of  
the reaction. The water was heated to  
different temperatures, and the rate of  
the reaction was determined by measuring  
the volume of gas evolved in a given  
time. The results showed that the rate  
of the reaction increased with the  
temperature of the water.

represent,(ref. John Ahern, Judy Chicago or to lesser extent James Scanlon and the work he produced in Sneem Co. Kerry; Scanlon, however seemingly works with the public being the most triumphant element, more so than his own ideas). This evaluation does not attempt to say that the gallery is going to have a responsive public and that art in the public will not. On the contrary an artist cannot really evaluate the response of an audience. It is however easier in a gallery due to the sharing of similar beliefs. Art lays the foundations that the ideology of the gallery can build upon and subsequently the gallery lays the foundations for the art to build upon.

March 24, 1948

Dear Mr. [illegible]

I have your letter of March 23, 1948.

I am sorry that I cannot

reply

to you more quickly, but I have been very busy.

I am sure that you will understand my position.

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The artist produces visual imagery that has been interpreted from other forms of imagery and language. An audience receives this visual imagery with opposing values to that of the artist, and in order for the audience to communicate this information, language is a requirement. This fragmentation utilises another language; a more verbal language; the process of communication gets broken down as it progresses through the diverse divisions of language. Consequently the artist's intentions gradually get lost. The structure has the quality of a pyramid, whereby the artist and the art are at the pinnacle and the audience and the artist's intent expands or contracts.

People generally see, hear, taste, smell and feel things differently. Some senses are more sensitive than others; a fine artist would have a high level of visual perception or a musician would be more receptive to sound. Ten artists for example, drawing the same landscape would undoubtedly produce ten completely individual images, due to their understanding of representation, etc. As a response to this, it is conceivable that people will see/read/interpret art differently depending on their fluency of the language and by making the initial distinction that something is categorically art. A separate thesis is required to deal with this issue; semiotics categorises. Roland Barthes, Louis Hjelmslev, Julia Kristeva as such deal with the fragmentation and significations of language offering theories that when applied to art offers a structure not of communication but of isolation. Although isolation is rife in art the art does not attempt to instigate this isolation; it would be

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ludicrous to cast a judgment of guilty upon anyone or anything for just simply existing. Art can only ever be read according to the agenda that art itself lays down at any given time. The audience must bear the brunt for any isolation that happens to exist. Even so, Barthes has argued extensively about the death of the author in relation to the audience dictating that once the work is released to an audience and thus interpreted the author or artist is insignificant. The audience changes the content based on its own reference points. It is the quality or extent of interpretation that is crucial. Only through valuable and resourceful communication can the role of the artist be sustained and, as iterated at the beginning, if the artist (by means of language) ceases so does the art and the audience. The author cannot die as Barthes maintains because the ideology that the author/artist pertains to, sustains their role throughout. The language of art, for example exists as a language because of the ideology of art that is sustained by interaction by an audience. The author/artist can only die when their work fails to reach an audience. Public art offers no such audience. The reader does not subtract from the significance of the author on the contrary it is this interaction that sustains the author.

One audience may only have the resource to see the information given - Monet's waterlilies or a Cezanne landscape- and are unable to elaborate beyond this initial stage, art cannot be valued as art until the language that sustains art is instigated. This language being that of the elements of composition, colour, form, tone, weight, balance, depth, etc. all that congeal to value art as being *good or bad art*. There needs to be the creative and subjective selection to define one thing as art as opposed to an





other. It is the context or refuge that the art world offers that contains the language of art. If this language attempts to break this haven, as in the case of public art, making the language totally accessible, values deflate to the extent that it becomes increasingly harder to define the art. Art must maintain its distance from the public in order for art to be defined. Consequently Public art can only be a historical thing once the art world has progressed through one level of communication and into another. That explains why the public can have impressionist art or cubist art in their home but cannot relate to contemporary practice. Public art cannot serve an immediate public and it is only a myth that it is for the mass public audience. This may be a huge underestimation of the public, but unless the public is aware and understanding to the process of creating contemporary art they cannot actually see any art. Public art is largely only read in its relationship to the surrounding architecture and landscape and is therefore intrinsic to architecture and not art. Barbara Kruger stated, in an interview with W.J.T. Mitchell:

I think that if architecture is a slab of meat, then so called public art is a piece of garnish. It has a kind of decorative function. (Mitchel, 1992, pp. 234)

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The public/audience -artist relationship,must arrive at some sort of resolution. There must be a compromise of integrity and ideologies. The artist will lend himself to the task of being a craft person, or the public will have to bridge the gap between an apathetic public and an interactive public and thus attaining to be the audience. The artist will lose the stature of what it is to be an artist because of the lack of creativity and initiative. Once the artist accepts the role of making public art,neither the artist can survive nor can the art and consequently the audience. The power beyond the artist is too great and it is with Marxism and even capitalism that such power is situated. Marxism and public art cannot mix . It is only through the interaction and evaluation of the socialist restraints that it becomes apparent that art, in an attempt to serve society, cannot be art. Public 'art' can only exist where the public ceases to exist. The study of art needs to be,according to Macherey,...a dual study: Art as ideological form and as aesthetic process...(Wolff,p.66)This is highly appropriate with reference to public art as it categorises; more often than not, this duality is divided. It is a division between those that understand the ideology and the aesthetic, and those that understand only the aesthetic which is based upon a lesser level of evaluation than that of the audience. Fine art cannot exist in the public sphere because the clash of ideologies hinders this. In any situation,art that is created as an answer to social,economic or political forces of the public, not only compromises the integrity of art but in turn patronises the intelligence of the public. There is so much emphasis placed on the idea that a non-art public and social

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consciousness connect. The public has the right to be associated with the art world and be part of the audience for art and social class is not an issue until socialists create the distinction, whereby isolating the public from art.

...The thoughts, feelings and actions of men are by no means always in accord, from a psychological point of view one would designate as their interests. They generally act and think in accord with a class consciousness for which the maintenance of ascertain class is cardinal, though not always the acknowledged aim.... (Hauser, Arnold, in, Frascina, f., & Harrison, (eds.) p.233).

Hauser assumes that art can only make people aware of and fuel class awareness. Hauser's analysis implies that art cannot escape the social experience, yet artists have always needed to comment on the process of art and the creation of art. Modernism exemplifies the evolving estrangement between art and the public; If art had to maintain class consciousness as goals modernism would not have developed as rapidly as it did. It would have had to move at the same pace as the public's understanding, which can be made clear that the contemporary public is only now beginning to appreciate impressionism. A select audience existed that allowed the art to progress beyond the developments of the public. If this audience did not exist, due to language barriers, then it would have undoubtedly taken a greater length of time. Moreover, all the analysis and communication takes place within the realms of the art world and not the social sphere.

...The struggle takes place more often between the visual ideologies of layers of the same class or the ruling class, than between the visual ideologies of the ruling class and the dominated class... (Hadjinicolaou, Nicos, in Frascina, f., & Harrison, (eds.) p.247).

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Hadjinicolaou inadvertently clarifies, in a given context, that art is not simply a social class ideology because the public/society has isolated itself from art through lack of language. Therefore the classes that Hadjinicolaou refers to can only be layers of visual understanding; the visual classes may reflect the social classes but art is not class conscious. The consciousness only appears through the audience and public. The distinction between audience and public is: those consciously communicating and those that are passively/apathetically included. Art, either private or public can only reach a public that intends to become the audience, thus completing the cycle. "Public art" assumes that an audience is the prerogative of art and that art will always be interpreted as art. Is it not therefore correct that art can only exist as art when it is read as being art. It exists in a certain context and that context is the gallery space. Art exists because of the gallery and the gallery exists because of the ideology of art. The place where people view art because they are aware that they are viewing art would subsequently define a gallery.

The ideology of the gallery is ever present in the art. The art cannot exist unless it is read as being from the art world, as such the gallery creates the plateau for art to be understood as being art. It is necessary to examine the extent to which art remains 'art' once it leaves the sanctuary of a given gallery, and to what extent the gallery has the power to dictate the terms for art. When art leaves the physical gallery space and into a more public sphere, two questions need to be asked and answered: to what extent does art lose its actual audience offered by the gallery? And to what extent is this audience replenished by the actual public?

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Modern art museums and galleries have their own audience, composed of people that frequent such institutions on a regular basis and are to some extent aware and acknowledging of the language, and are also aware that they are there to see art. The art world has become institutionalised in the recent past, so much so that large percentages of the public have never visited a gallery and accept art on art's terms and cannot appreciate art in its initial context. The "white cube", is where all of the external world is eliminated, windows are sealed, artificial lighting is used to replace natural sunlight and walls and ceilings are painted white, serves to extend the isolation of art from the public. This somewhat elitist view of art is not meant to add to the disparity of art and the public, on the contrary it attempts to highlight that art is impartial and all the politics that adhere to art cause the problems of isolation. It is the physical gallery that creates divisions as opposed to the ideological gallery sphere.

It is necessary to assume that the audience for art in the public sector is small in comparison to the audience of the gallery, because there is not an initial statement proclaiming the work as being art, and also art in the public sphere is not as isolated and aesthetic as art in the gallery. Public sector art would require an audience that has the capabilities to differentiate between the ideology of the public and the ideology of art. Art situated in the public sphere must be read as art by that public. Arguably the audience would not be truly reflective of the general public because the public is non-artistic and an artistic response would transfer that section of the public into the region of the audience because they would be interpreting using the criteria of the art world. Therefore, once an





audience exists they must be distinguished from the public and the art serves an art audience not a public. All of this bases itself on the belief that the 'visual class' exists and once a person is initiated to this class a shift occurs from public to audience.

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Why is it exactly that the public is so apathetic to art Either in the public or private sphere? Even when any degree of discourse takes place the public can only question a piece's existence and not its meaning. Questions such as: What is it?,What is it doing here?,What is it all about?,etc.. achieve very little in terms of response because any answers are quite irrelevant to the object being a piece of art. Phrases like, "I would have preferred a new garden with flowers", or, "The money would have been better spent preventing crime increase", or, "It's an eyesore" all become synonymous with public responses to public art. It is ironical that at this stage that an apathetic public verges on the boundary between just a public and being an audience. Unfortunately it usually halts before meaningful discourse and interaction occur. It must be stressed however that it is only the contemporary public that hinders public art, e.g. art placed in a public sphere fifty years ago may be more publicly accessible in a further fifty years but would consequently be less artistic by contemporary standards. This highly condescending or elitist attitude merely punctuates the general public expectations of art. Art has evolved rapidly in the past One hundred year, more rapidly than the anticipation of art,the public are able to access the language of art but time is required. Without the factor of time for interpretation art would find it almost impossible to exist. Public art can only be read as art by a public when the public ceases to exist. By the time discernment occurs the role that art had has since been displaced for a newer more contemporary art. (Modern art is being assessed now while the art world is concentrating on the Post-



Modern).

The art world maintains a trench space between itself and the masses. It is this space that maintains art as art otherwise sameness and none individuality would excel. As the space depletes, as it does with public art, the quality of the art must also deplete: the further art removes itself from an external base the higher the calibre of the art; high art is that which elevates itself beyond discernment of the public. If art does not attempt to stress itself beyond the limitations of understanding, it cannot command any more of a presence than a table or chair; it can only become something practical or manufactured. Art has subsequently developed to the stage whereby the art need have no physical practicality requirement other than to be answerable to the agenda of the art world and art audience. Here the argument that art is only a product, an assemblage of components that society has to offer, loses its validity because it is quite apparent that art is an output caused by society (i.e. society is based on class distinctions, either social, political, economic or visual; art is a response to visual differences) but it is the selective process and initiation of intelligence that generates the cross-over from that which is made and that which is created. A necessary margin is created between art and the public. Public art, through advocating the prerogative of the masses negates this margin; it does not bridge the gap between the public sphere and the art sphere it conversely extends it. Art that fends for itself beyond the gallery plateau, e.g. Richard Serra, Henry Moore and even the socialist artists Picasso or Leger, should not masquerade as being for the public. Different visual values set the two sides apart, there is a necessary conflict that allows for each to

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the project.

2. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the methodology used.

3. The third part of the report is a detailed description of the results obtained.

4. The fourth part of the report is a discussion of the results and their implications.

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prosper. (Art ceases if everything is art; science ceases if everything is understood; language ceases if there is only a solitary language). It appears as a futile endeavour to create art works suitable for a public. A public will always have the inability to understand the exigencies of art and it is audacious to assume that art and the public go hand in hand. What then is the role of publicly based art? Is it a myth that art can actually exceed beyond the confines or ideology of the gallery? Art can only assume the role publicly where upon the public ceases. Public art without the public. The artist creates the art, the art creates the audience, the audience creates the artist, this cycle effectively determines what art is at any given period.

Artists are totally reflective of their situation in society. That is to say, artist's can not work beyond the limitations of the art world. The distance between the artist and the social sphere would suggest that the artist works ahead of his/her time or has a certain foresight. On the contrary, it is the public, with reference to art, that is behind the time. The artist can only create subject to the visual and aesthetic tastes of the market; the market thus being the audience of which the artist is included.

The artist is subject to the tastes, preferences, ideas and aesthetic notions of those who influence the market. In as much as he produces works of art destined for a market that absorbs them. The artist cannot fail to heed the exigencies of this market: they also affect the form as well as the content of the work of art, thus placing limitations on the artist: stifling his creative potential, his individuality. (Vasquez, A.S., in, Wollf, 1973, p.18).

Such an argument rests upon the limitations of the artist and the visual art market. An artist has to have limitations in order to have an agenda to understand the basis of art. If limitations are not apparent



art would be infinite and infinities only produces futilities. What is currently recognised as being art would, in turn, be a fact, thus leading to the scenario that art would be infinite; one piece would summarise art. It must be stressed that the market can not be financial only visual. An artist produces art for the market and is quite aware of the tastes, preferences, ideas and aesthetic notions of the market. Both stem from the same seed ideologically. The market aids the artist in the quest to extend the boundaries. Art works from the past have largely served their purpose as art and are not considered contemporary. There is a continual struggle to create new and original art works, one that must constantly refer to all that has gone before. This hypothesis lends itself to the argument that art is obsolete once it is actually accepted by the audience / market. The art is that which is being produced in the present tense. Public art is not accepted by any audience or visual market and cannot share the same ideology as that of the private, gallery based art. Consequently no limitations are placed on the art or artist and the work is futile.

Vasquez, by referring to the limitations as being financial, emphasises the goal for 'public sector artists' as being that of finance, not art. To extend to the extreme and refer to capitalism negates the role of the artist. The external forces dictate what art should be. Vasquez continues; "...Artistic work comes under the general law of capitalist production and becomes regarded as merchandise..." thus dictating that capitalism instructs art. Any controlled state, e.g. Russia under the control of communism, instructs its own definition of art, not the actual art that has the ability to remain autonomous under any regime. Janet Wolff elaborates on





this idea of Vasquez yet approaches it from another point of view:

...Many artists will work as wage labourers (in industry and advertising or for the media), and the rest have to resort to the art market to sell their work. The latter will be free to pursue their own creative inclination than the former...(Wolff,p.18).

What both Janet Wolff and Vasquez fail to recognise is that art that is reliant on money, calls for a shift in priorities as the artist must compromise to the demands of the financial market, instead of the art visual market (manufacturing what the commissioner requires). Hence there is no free expression on the part of the artist. Generally, money is a major factor in the current society whereby if you need something you will have to have a source of income; artists use their art practice and skills as this source and not necessarily their art. Wolff also fails to recognise that those working in industry or media can use their labour as a source of capital that will allow them to pursue the trueness of their art. The art can therefore be isolated and not restricted by money or other prevailing external factors. True communication can exist and the artist is under no obligation to compromise the art. Artists working for the art market directly (Wolff refers to a financial market) has no escape but to compromise to the needs and expectations of that market. The purpose here is not to idealise one means of production, assuming that one shall produce a more aesthetic art, the purpose is to highlight that there must be a sphere where art can exist as *art for arts sake*.





In Dublin there are a number of sculptures that adorn the streets that are deemed as being public; notably, the Anna Livia fountain on O'Connell Street, Molly Malone at the bottom of Grafton Street, or Parable Island in Pimlico are arguably not art based sculptures although they appear to be utilising the language of art from a very dated perspective. It could also be argued that these works are not to a large degree even public. The Anna Livia fountain did not produce a strong response from the public when instigated. The public response was one of contempt and the response from other artists was equally negative. These examples are of sculptures reduced to the language of the public so that they can be utilised for the needs of the controlling powers. The other approach seems to be to make art and plonk it in the public environment in the hope that it may take on a new life away from the gallery but fixed to the ideology of the gallery. It seems to be that the legacy of Modernism is that public art is alienating to many publics. To specify, the work of the following three artists will articulate that art is either being produced or objects are being manufactured. The work is produced according to the ideology they share with art and the gallery and it is ideological language that is the impetus for Non- public, public sector art. Richard Serra, Anthony Gormley and Christo produce works for the gallery yet utilise the outside sphere. The work maintains its autonomy even though the art is destined for a public context because the artists have had to acquire the reputation that allows them the ability to become the product and not the art. The



financial market is not pertaining to purchase a piece of art merely the product which is thus the artist's signature. It is the artist that is consumed although Marx is inclined to deny the intermediary level of the artist.

The new reductionism of revolutionary theory...sees painting as only a visual ideology of a class. When a painter is working he is aware of the means which are available to him- these include materials, the style he inherits, the conventions he must obey, his prescribed or freely chosen subject matter- as constituting both an opportunity and a restraint. By working and choosing the opportunity he becomes conscious of some of his limits. These limits challenge him either at an artisnal, a marginal or an imaginative level. He pushes against one or several of them...

Ideology partly determines the finished result, but it does not determine the energy flowing through the current.(Berger,John,in,Wolff,,pp.69-70)

What distinguishes the artist from the rest is the response to the context and concept, limitations and opportunities. These external forces may be the catalyst for the reaction but it is the action on the part of the artist that creates an output-Art... If there is an inability to react to the forces that determine the restraints of his/her art, then he/she is a servant or craftsperson to the parameters (the public is one such parameter as is money etc.). Pre- modernist public works offered more to the genre of craft than to Fine Art. Largely monumental sculptures were created with the notion of physical ability whereas contemporary public Art attempts to extend the subjective notion of art in the public sphere. The public has never really been the intention of public art; contemporary art occupied a public sphere for one reason only and that was/is to push the boundaries that confine the ideology of art.





...trying to attract a bigger audience has nothing to do with the making of art. It has to do with making yourself a product, only to be consumed by the people. Working this way allows society to determine the terms and concept of art and the artist must then fulfil these terms: I find the idea of populism self defeating...(Serra,Richard,in,Raven,p.227).

Marxian theorists big mistake was and is to believe that art has to be a product and society the consumer. Modernism has made it inevitable that art has to succeed on a level opposed to the one it existed on,i.e. Art for Arts sake as opposed to art for society's sake. This has all occurred due to the depletion of the potential audience. Art is freer now to act for the exclusive development of the ideology that elevates art to the level it now sits upon (above and beyond the discernment of the general public). What can the art become if it is answerable to the restrictions imposed by the public? In both scenarios, public ART and PUBLIC art the work acts according to the ideology of monumentalism. Here the work is erected not to serve any apparent public but to act as a monument to the artist, the art world and most of all the patrons of the art. Public art has always been about exemplifying the people in power. More historical pieces are about Kings, Queens,leaders of industry, people who were elevated above the general public. Work that is dedicated to such factions of power maintain that such art sustains social inequality. It is incorrect to assume that this work even attempts to adhere to the ideology of art. At this level, where the 'art' has been reduced to an accessible language for the public offers nothing to that public only a glimpse of the ruling social class ideology. In and around Dublin there are multiple sculptures that cannot exist as art and manipulate and patronise the public. The Anna Livia sculpture/



fountain depicts a member of a powerful family that would have undoubtedly extracted itself away from the majority of society. A cast iron abstract sculpture can have little effect on its public that has to content itself with the problems inner city life offers. Public art still remains to be a political tool, utilised to score goals for groups in power against other groups in power. It is this power struggle that leaves public art without a public and without an audience. Such instances where the work is manipulated for the prevailing powers, exemplifies the class consciousness and class control that Marx, Hauser, Clark, Wolff, etc. talk about. Art does not have the ability to create and maintain class- consciousness, that ability exists within the audience.



## **Conclusion:**

Where can this debate actually lead? In an attempt to answer this and the questions posed at the outset and throughout the course of this argument, it is imperative that the distinction between art and the public is realised and that they must progress on parallel lines so that either or both can exist. There must be no compromise of ideologies or what is assumed as being the base ideology because through sameness, there is no struggle and it is such a struggle that allows for any practice of art. The questioning of the role of art in the public sphere can be adequately answered at this stage, with reference to the structures that maintain any society. For example art cannot succeed as being recognised as art under the dictation of any form of socialism, capitalism fascism or any other dictating body that has the power to stifle the creativity of the artist. Art that is intrinsic to external forces compromises the integrity of the artist and also the external force. Concerning public art, the public and the hierarchy above the artist call for the artist to cast away the instinctive role of creativity and individuality. This approach calls for the immediacy of 'art for arts sake' whereby art cannot serve two masters. It must only serve the ideology of the art world, and subsequently that of the gallery as they are part and parcel of the one identity. Art that is answerable to the public sector or to non-art demands must either cease to be art completely or dissolve into the succeeding context to the extent of insignificance. Art has no role in the public sphere because what is constituted as being public cannot be seen as being art. Art has only one role and that





exists within the ideology of the gallery. Attempting to bridge the gap between the art ideology and the public ideology only strengthens the opposing factors that maintains the inert disparity. Art is an autonomous resource that exists as art because of its autonomy. The public, by definition, is multi dimensional and cannot adhere to the demands of the art. It is merely a paradox to juxtapose art and the public together; art is the decree of the individual whereas the public assumes the multiple, hence the paradox.

An artist's initial role is to communicate; this communication occurs between the art and the audience. The audience exists due to its willingness to interpret, evaluate and aspire to understand the information given. The public that is supposedly the responsive body for public art is unable to continue with any relevant communication because it does not have the necessary criteria to assess a piece of art. The relevant criteria is only available through the knowledge of what has preceded allowing for the latter to be meaningful, (i.e. a public that has little or no knowledge of early twentieth century art can not fully appreciate mid or late twentieth century art). Consequently an artist cannot communicate if there is nobody willing or able to receive.

Left wing ideologies fail with respect to the teaching of the arts. There lies the inability to recognise that in the quest for a complete audience there has been no recognition or understanding of what an audience actually is. Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, along with other theorists, incorporated a complete public and not a complete audience. This constant referral to early communist teachings does not try to allocate public art as



an an early modernist misconception, on the contrary, it tries to approach contemporary public art from a contemporary social perspective that has been accomplished through an accumulative trickle down effect. This leads to the conclusion that socialism has got it wrong and that publics are created through individual responses which are similar but not identical. To assume that art can bridge the gap assumes that the public can diversify to the level of everyone around. Sameness *only creates nothingness*. The conundrum that exists between the artist, art, and the public has little to do with elitist or bourgeois ideology, it is in consequence a practical solution that elevates creativity and visual aesthetic to the level of art. It is the necessary disparity that enables art. Art that interferes with this imbalance does not add it merely subtracts. Art that exists in the public sector offers two levels for interpretation. Firstly, the art invades the public sphere by acting as art, or secondly the work interacts within the given context, i.e. architecture garnish, thus becoming unable to operate beyond this context and appear as art for arts sake. This is highly problematic, especially with reference to quite recent controversies involving public art, most notably that of Richard Serra and the Tilted Arc construction and ensuing destruction. Serra created art and with the notion of the public in mind and not the other way about. This leads to the so called public wanting the removal of the piece and the debate about who is the actual work for? To categorise Serra's work as public only proves that the public does not generally want art and to place work in their environment insults their status within society. By summarising the information and issues raised within the course

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2. The second part is a detailed description of the methods used in the study.

3. The third part is a discussion of the results of the study.

4. The fourth part is a conclusion and a list of references.

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30. The thirtieth part is a list of the names of the agents.

31. The thirty-first part is a list of the names of the brokers.

32. The thirty-second part is a list of the names of the dealers.

33. The thirty-third part is a list of the names of the merchants.



of this dissertation the barrier created by language is probably the key factor that sustains art and also the public but not both simultaneously. *Public art* can be nothing more than a political football utilised by the prevailing powers to score goals that will benefit themselves rather than those, by definition, it is meant to serve.

The discourse that is given appears to only deal with the contradictions that exist within public art. There are numerous pathways leading to one outlet and that outlet is art. Public art is the epitome of contradictions that lies within the parameters of art. On one hand it is art for the public yet if that public realises itself then the work is in jeopardy of actually failing as a piece of art. The parameters that art creates have been shifted so much so that art has become more and more unrecognisable to those that are actually reading the art. Art has become in recent years, especially since the advent of conceptualism, something that is based upon the mental rather than physical. Art is only a representation of the psychological and if the language is unavailable there is no understanding. What is actually given is not necessarily the nature of the art.

Art must have evolved to a degree that it is not about what it should be about. There is such a huge umbrella that incorporates contemporary art practice, whereas it is reasonable to assume that there must be two parallel tracks running simultaneously; Art for arts sake and art for the development of an alternative art ideology. Ultimately, as argued, the disparity between art and the public lies within the definition of the audience. Art that breaches the ideology of the gallery space cannot hope to replenish the

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audience that it shall inevitably loose. Art in the public sphere is read according to the context it is situated within thus depleting the extent that it is read and interpreted as art. The public does not have the ability to transcend to the level of the audience because by doing so they will no longer be part of the public but part of the audience contain within the ideology of art. Consequently, there is a very fine balance existing, whereby if the audience becomes so great that the level of expectation lowers, so does the calibre of the art thus creating a new art for higher expectations but for a smaller portion of audience. Therefore there is an inability to ever truly exceed beyond the gallery sphere and ultimately public art is a myth created and upheld by elitist factions within society and not within the art ideological sphere.



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