**PUBLIC ART AND URBAN SPACES:
THE PLACE OF ART IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST
IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION**

Calvin McKnight, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Geography**

Carleton University

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PUBLIC ART AND THE URBAN LANDSCAPE:
THE PLACE OF ART IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST
IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

submitted by Calvin B. McKnight, B.A.
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Geography

Carleton University
May 7, 1996

ABSTRACT

This thesis is focused on a critical analysis and evaluation of the role of public art in the development of open spaces in the National Capital Region; specifically in the context of three recent projects commissioned by three distinct administrative bodies: the National Capital Commission, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and the City of Ottawa. A comparison of *Shelter/Tissage*, *TransArt*, and *Shelter...Loss and Replacement*, and an evaluation of their place in the urban fabric in which they are situated, will aid in the recognition of the kinds of processes integral to the future creation of relevant, interesting, and vital public open spaces. This examination will also problematize the theoretical and institutional approaches to urban design that characterize contemporary debates over the meaning of the public realm and the realities of urban form in the Canadian city.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is focused on a critical analysis and evaluation of the role of public art in the development of open spaces in the National Capital Region, specifically in the context of three recent projects commissioned by three distinct administrative bodies: the National Capital Commission, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and the City of Ottawa. This shared responsibility for the design and management of aesthetic interventions in the public realm is characteristic of the unique geographical, political, cultural, and social position of the city of Ottawa, and the role that these circumstances play in the design and production of meanings in the urban landscape. A comparison of these projects, and an evaluation of their place in the urban fabric in which they are situated, will aid in the recognition of the kinds of processes integral to the future creation of relevant, interesting, and vital public open spaces. This examination will also problematize the theoretical and institutional approaches to urban design that characterize contemporary debates over the meaning of the public realm and the realities of urban form in the Canadian city.

The first chapter of the thesis will focus primarily on a discussion of the specific socio-spatial and cultural changes that have been occurring in urban centers over the past twenty years, changes that are often associated with economic restructuring, and shifts in industrial development and capitalist production. The destabilization of the modernist project, particularly in terms of discourses related to urban planning, has fostered a number of critical ways of looking at city form and function, and at the increasingly

blurred relationship between public and private space. An analysis of the central characteristics of the built environment from a broadly Marxist urban studies perspective will be undertaken in order to question many of the prevailing assumptions related to how cities are designed and whose interests are represented in the decision-making process. Although much of this work has been done at the abstract level and/or at the level of the large ('global') metropolis, such a framework, with a recognition of its potential shortcomings, will contribute to a determination of the motivation behind institutional public art initiatives for urban spaces at the local level. This would include consideration of the role of imperatives like economic development, entrepreneurialism, the aesthetic objectification of cities, and the increased importance of cultural production in attracting capital, in the form of private investment and tourism. Through this examination, the potential value of art in the public interest as an avenue for encouraging public participation in the process of urban planning and design will also be articulated.

The second chapter will be focused around a broad overview and history of artistic interventions in the public realm, in order to locate recent public art projects in the National Capital Region in an appropriate cultural, political, and historical context. Similar in many ways to the development of varying interpretations of socio-spatial changes in the built environment, discourses related to the production of monuments, sculptures and other 'public' projects have diversified in recent years to incorporate an exceptionally broad range of artistic practices. 'New genre' public art has increasingly attempted to overcome the cultural elitism and political disengagement traditionally

associated with aesthetic interventions in public spaces, using traditional and non-traditional techniques to educate, inform, and collaborate with large and diverse audiences.

As a result, the language of 'public art' has changed, becoming more inclusive and more explicitly political, often in an effort to challenge existing social, economic, and institutional structures through the subversion of largely rhetorical notions of 'democracy', 'community', and 'the public interest': terminologies which continue to be invoked in an effort to create the perception of consensus and community involvement in the processes of urban form-giving. The central purpose of this examination is a critical exploration of the kinds of possibilities that exist for meaningful and effective public participation in the urban design process. Many of these new and/or alternative strategies are unconventional, in that they are attempting to document or reflect the prevailing conditions of the contemporary city. As a result, they may be particularly effective as a means of empowering community organizations and other groups to become involved as collaborators in public art projects.

The city of Ottawa is uniquely suited to discussions related to the themes of urban design, participatory planning, and public art, due to its specific geographical, cultural, and political circumstances. As national capital, Ottawa's landscape contains a variety of built forms that relate to its position as the symbolic centre of Canadian politics, as repository of national heritage and culture, and as an international tourist destination. The city is also the largest metropolitan area in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, and plays an integral role in the region's economy. Ottawa, similar to other urban centers, is

characterized by the prevalence of a number of competing interests, including those of community activists, businesses, and politicians, as they attempt to influence official policies related to revitalization, economic development, heritage conservation, and urban design. The involvement of a variety of federal, provincial, regional, and local authorities on both the Quebec and Ontario sides of the Ottawa River in the location, construction, and upgrading of public space, serves to further complicate matters, with the result being the involvement of a number of agencies in programs with dissimilar mandates and markedly different results. This chapter will establish the context for a comparative exploration of public participation in urban form-giving in the National Capital Region by identifying prevailing characteristics of the urban landscape of Ottawa-Carleton, and by differentiating between the official rhetoric of public involvement and the disjointed reality of the decisions that are taken, and the kinds of priorities that they reflect.

The most effective means of determining how public art is related to the open spaces and ceremonial landscapes of Ottawa, and to what extent the community is presently involved in the planning and implementation of various artistic initiatives, is through a comparative analysis and evaluation of three recent projects. Unlike their historical precedents - sculptures and monuments that employed formal techniques and modernist design principles - *Shelter/Tissage*, *Festival Plaza*, and *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* all attempt to reflect the changing role of art in public places, and the changing priorities involved in the commissioning and siting of public art projects in the nation's capital.

Completed in 1992 and presently installed at Rideau Falls Park, *Shelter/Tissage* is a permanent multimedia sculpture commissioned by the National Capital Commission to commemorate the 125th Anniversary of Canada, as part of the NCC's commitment to 'communicating' Canada to Canadians and to visually representing Canada's national identity. It was symbolically created in an open studio, with the artist collaborating with 'ordinary' citizens from across Canada. By contrast, *TransArt* has involved the integration of a variety of artistic elements into the public transportation network of Ottawa-Carleton. These projects have occurred primarily at Stations along the Transitway - a roadway dedicated solely to the use of Ottawa-Carleton Transportation Commission vehicles. As an example of public art in a 'regional' context, *TransArt* offers rare insight into the process of commissioning art in public spaces at the upper tier of local government. *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* is an ongoing project that was closely related to the City of Ottawa's redevelopment plan for the Rideau Street corridor, bordering on the downtown core. This project endeavors to redefine the existing streetscape, to engage the viewer, and to foster a sense of civic identity by interpreting the local traditions, culture, and values of Ottawa's citizens.

Although these three projects are substantively distinct, both in terms of their formal elements and their function, as well as in the kind of community participation they have involved, a comparison of the three will allow for a comprehensive evaluation of how the public can be involved in the process, and whether or not this involvement is essential to the meaningful integration of public art projects into the urban landscape. The purpose of this kind of exploration and the use of the case studies is primarily to locate current

debates over the design of public places in a specific context. One of the dangers as well as one of the appeals of discourses related to issues of urban design and public art is the imperative towards generalization and abstraction in the theorization of subversive acts of resistance, contested public spaces, and (re)imagined communities. Although there is a necessity to engage with theoretical approaches, there is an equally important need to relate conceptual frameworks to existing conditions, in order to suggest ways to address problems related to the design, management, and public use of open spaces in urban centers.

The concluding chapter of the thesis will work towards the possibility of establishing a set of criteria that might characterize effective and sustained community participation in the design of contemporary public art projects, as well as in urban planning more generally. By drawing on the experiences of the three projects in the National Capital Region, and linking them to a consideration of a number of innovative projects undertaken in other places, the potential values of public art to the urban landscape will also be articulated. In the current context, it appears to be increasingly problematic to reconcile the difference between the rhetoric of public engagement and the realities that increasingly characterize local political, cultural, social, and economic arrangements. Practices associated with 'new genre' public art, in combination with other contemporary efforts to shape the form and function of urban space by emphasizing issues like livability, sustainability, accessibility, and safety, may offer a means of creating a city that is more attuned to the plurality of needs and desires of those who live there.

CHAPTER ONE: MODERNITY, POSTMODERNITY, AND THE CITY

Introduction

The central issues related to the planning and design of cities have changed substantially over time, as many of the pressing concerns facing Canadian urban centres in the 1950s and 1960s have been superseded by new, and at times conflicting, imperatives. This shift has been linked to the distinctive socio-economic and cultural forces that have increasingly come to be associated with the most recent period of capitalist accumulation and industrial restructuring. In many important ways, it has also been recognized that the contemporary city can no longer be viewed as a unified subject of analysis. As a result, a variety of new theoretical frameworks have increasingly been adopted by urbanists in order to 'read' the urban landscape and the built environment more as the physical manifestation of shifting social relations, and as the site of contested meanings, changing patterns of consumption, and symbolic representations of power. Culture, art, and aesthetics have come to play important roles in these emerging discourses.

This introductory chapter will engage in a general discussion of the basic tenets of 'modern' and 'postmodern' urban theory as well as the nature of the institutional response of planners and design professionals to these changes, in both the American and Canadian contexts. Also critical to this discussion is an engagement with how these discourses related to urban form-giving are reflected through changes in the planning and design of public space and in the nature of aesthetic interventions in the public realm. Such an overview is integral to any determination of the extent of community involvement and public participation in the process of urban design in the National Capital Region.

‘Modern’ Urban Theory

In North America, the spatial paradigm of modernity, as a periodizing concept, typifies the immediate post-war era, between 1945 and the early 1970s (Harvey 1987, p.260), and can be generalized by a number of salient characteristics that either directly or indirectly influenced the shape and form of urban growth at that time. These include a differentiated geographic spread to the periphery of cities, both in terms of industrial and residential development, a tendency towards the production of standardized products for volume markets (in order to achieve economies of scale), the importance of transportation infrastructures for the circulation of commodities, economic development in close proximity to new ‘collective consumption’ environments, and a characteristic demand for skilled and semi-skilled labour to fill secure ‘lifetime’ occupations (Cooke 1988, p.483).

The institutional response to these socio-economic and spatial shifts was framed by a consolidation of the role of planning as a key process in the determination of the form and function of urban space. The result was the gradual introduction of the large-scale comprehensive master plan and of heightened state intervention in the land and property development process, in an effort to foster a more effective regulation of the terms of social reproduction and economic production (Dear 1986 p.377). The totalizing nature of the ‘master plan’ was and continues to be symbolic of the planning discipline’s practical and theoretical dependence on master narratives to aid in the effort to create a coherent urban form that meets a maximum number of functional requirements. In this way, the

modernist project of urban design was constructed around models of problem-solving and decision-making that guided state intervention in order “to diminish the excesses of industrial capitalism while mediating the intramural frictions among capitalists that had resulted in a city inefficiently organized for production and reproduction” (Beauregard 1989, p.384). Emphasis was largely placed on managerialism, with urban administrators controlling access to such services as public sector housing, state-funded education, and leisure facilities (Cooke 1990, p.340). This technical rather than political rationality was perceived of as transcending the interests of capital, labour, and the state, as well as contributing to the maintenance of a critical distance in the production of a coordinated and functional urban form organized around collective goals and economic growth.

Planners of the post-war era also adhered to a belief in an idealized urban future in which social problems would be corrected and humanity liberated from the constraints of scarcity and greed (Jencks 1985). The validation of this position was largely dependent on both the particular economic dynamics of the industrial city and on the parallel and continuous economic and spatial expansion of the middle classes. The perceived blurring of class distinctions due to unprecedented post-war economic growth validated a totalizing belief that society was not riven with contradictions, and that the built environment could be organized physically for ‘public’ purposes. This procedural style was influenced by the methodological approaches and solutions of the natural sciences, and in practical application translated into the efficient and technocratic management of the city, largely in the interests of developers and corporations (Chorney 1990, p. 196). By the 1960s, the urban planning function had been institutionalized in the Canadian

system of local government, and became dominated by the goals and objectives of city and municipal administrations who interpreted their mandate as "being the prudent and orderly administration of physical services to support growth and development" (Kiernan 1990, p.13).

Importantly, the period directly preceding the economic downturn of the early 1970s also witnessed the advent of a concern for public involvement in the planning process. Citizen participation and advocacy planning movements were both developed in this era, stemming from a general trend towards and the increasing popularity of participatory democratic politics, as well as a growing recognition of the inadequacies of existing political and economic arrangements. Such reformist efforts often focused on attempts to create a more equitable distribution of resources and rewards, ideally through greater citizen participation in planning decisions. For the most part, these participatory objectives implied that the impetus for involvement would be voluntary and would be generated from within neighborhoods and communities, lending legitimacy to the entire consultative process (Sancar 1994, p.329).

Although this concept of planners as advocates of the poor and marginalized actors within the urban environment provided an appealing alternative approach for left-liberal planners (Chorney 1990, p.197), actually mobilizing communities in support of a common good required the invocation of a series of assumptions that proved exceedingly difficult to translate into reality. Unfortunately, much of the enthusiasm generated by these movements did not result in meaningful or long-lasting inclusion in the planning process, highlighting the inability of advocacy planning to effectively address the dynamic

nature of capitalist society (Cenzatti 1987). As a result, the largely unrealized emancipatory potential of progressive planning had been virtually abandoned by the 1970s, eclipsed by even greater divisions between radical theoretical planning strategy and professional or technical planning practice.

The physical design and layout of urban open spaces during this era was most closely associated with an overriding concern for order and rationality. The widespread use of sector and zone models allowed planners to prioritize a determination of land use patterns and a regulation of the city's outward growth and expansion. Universalizing forces of abstraction and *anomie* (Robins 1991, p.1) closely associated with modernism and modernist design principles informed many of the large-scale projects of urban development undertaken in the post-war period. Not surprisingly, a strong emphasis was placed on formalism and 'International Style' architecture in the design of high-rise corporate monuments, residential apartment complexes, and in the new residential developments of suburbia (Cooke 1990, p.339). This steady growth and expansion outwards was accompanied by a perceived unwillingness or inability to create and/or provide for networks of urban public spaces for the purposes of community interaction and engagement in the downtown cores of Canadian cities, apart from the privatized, commercially functional, but "socially dysfunctional" shopping plaza (Chorney 1990, p.202).

There is considerable debate as to the reasons for this movement away from public life and the public sphere, towards more privatized spheres and spaces. Changes in the

density of development and in the diversity of city residents during this era may have adversely affected the potential of a thriving public life to develop in relation to existing streets, squares, or parks. Similarly, the market's gradual internalization of circulatory spaces into large office and retail complexes may have dispensed with the need for an active public realm, further increasing the fragmentation of the city (Lee 1994, p.268). However, as Michael Brill and others have articulated, part of the difficulty may also be related to a lack of historical precedent for the integration of open spaces into the context of a street life that has historically (in North America) been oriented two-dimensionally towards economic, rather than social, sensibilities (Brill 1989, p.16). The erosion or abandonment of "open-minded" public spaces, in the form of the idealized Renaissance square or *piazza* designed to accommodate a number of incompatible or unpredictable uses, and its replacement with "single-minded" private spaces in the form of shopping centres and commercial complexes is one of the prevailing themes of geographical and sociological accounts of the late twentieth century North American city (Walzer 1986, p.471). This nostalgic "literature of loss" and the mourning of public life in the work of Richard Sennett, Hannah Arendt, and others, suggests that there has been a deepening crisis in the public realm and an impoverishment of public life which urban designers and architects have only recently and rather unsuccessfully attempted to address (Brill 1989, p.8).

'Postmodern' Urban Theory

Although there is no consensus among urban theorists as to the definitive shape or character of the contemporary city, there is a general recognition that the kinds of processes that are shaping the metropolis today are in many ways distinct from those that marked earlier periods of capitalist production and accumulation, as are their effects. This 'postmodern' turn of contemporary theoretical debate is indicative of a project which, in many ways, problematizes previously held assumptions about who lives in cities. It also recognizes, to a large extent, the spatializing impact of contemporary social relations (including those of gender, class, race, and sexuality) as well as the heightened importance of cultural consumption and production. The purpose of this discussion is to highlight the central themes of this debate, and to articulate accompanying shifts in municipal planning practice as well as the effect these have had on the organization and management of the built environment, particularly in terms of the provision and design of urban public space.

Much of the recent literature on the geography of the city has been dedicated to a critical discussion of the characteristics of the 'new' urban landscape. This process has required the consideration of a diverse array of factors that continue to shape the urban political economy, in order to provide a context for qualitatively 'reading' contemporary urban change. Some of the broad themes often related to this new paradigm include: increasingly uneven industrial development, an empirical divergence of income and unemployment between classes and regions, production oriented towards customized

output for niche markets aiming for economies of scope, economic development in areas of privatized consumption, as well as insecure and limited labour opportunities and an overall decline in public intervention and regulation (Cooke 1988, Soja 1989). The current period is also thought to be marked by capital overaccumulation, as well as a widening of the internal economic base of cities, the rise of new international rentier circuits and the information economy, the wholesale abandonment of the ideal of urban reform, and the denial of the separation of public and private space (Davis 1985, Zukin 1988, p.435).

What is particularly problematic about advancing a definitive set of criteria is that much of the analysis and discussion has been at the level of the global city and/or the large American metropolis, where the socio-spatial relations associated with urban restructuring seem to be more readily apparent. Although the substantive elements of these changes are continually contested and debated, themes such as the increasing prevalence of homelessness, gentrification, income polarization, ethnic segregation, and postmodern architectural styles in Los Angeles and New York have become virtually synonymous with today's new urban landscape, through the work of theorists and critics like Mike Davis, Neil Smith, and Ed Soja, among others. As a result, it is important to recognize that the effects of these various forces remain spatially differentiated, socially constructed, and influenced by local circumstances. Many of these phenomena are contradictory, many of them have recently undergone substantive and critical reappraisal, and many of these processes have occurred to a much lesser extent in other (Canadian) contexts (Thrft 1993, p.231).

Discussions related to postmodernity and the city have also recognized that the scope of these changes may require the adaptation of traditional Marxist analytical models, based solely on economic imperatives, to an interdisciplinary urban studies that recognizes the influence of culture and politics (Zukin 1988). Many of the contemporary debates over the specific meanings of urban form are concerned with the relationship between forces of capitalist accumulation and economic restructuring and such factors as the effects of cultural production, new patterns of collective consumption, and development of a class-based 'new social aesthetic' (Sassen 1991, p.235). This study is located at this 'intersection' of capital and culture - as the often uneasy and unmediated relationship between them effectively highlights the practical and ideological tensions which permeate contemporary urban discourses related to public art and the production of meaning in the urban landscape.

In terms of the role of urban planning and design as a response to these changes, there are several themes which are directly related to the above trends, and as a result they have important implications for the changing spatial organization of cities. These include a blurring of the traditional roles played by public agencies and private interests in the planning, design and management of cities, as well as a dramatic rise in the symbolic importance of cultural production and consumption, as urban areas are increasingly recreated as aesthetic objects. These changes have also signified a continued erosion of the political autonomy of planners and have precipitated a renewed and prolonged effort

to ascertain what might constitute a progressive or more participatory planning approach in the 1990s.

One of the defining characteristics of the contemporary period has been the relative decline of public or state intervention in urban development. In Canada, since the demise of the Federal Government's Secretary of State for Urban Affairs and the Neighborhood Improvement Program (N.I.P.) in the late 1970s, it has become increasingly clear that municipalities and other government agencies no longer possess the financial resources nor the moral authority to act solely in the public interest. Policy positions are increasingly ambivalent, often restricted "to reforms compatible with the continued domination of capitalist logic" while remaining reticent to engage with issues such as low-income housing, day care, and social service delivery (Chorney 1990, p.209). The fiscal crisis of the 1970s and the political conservatism of the 1980s have also contributed to this shift towards entrepreneurialism in metropolitan government management.

Local public sector strategies for the built environment have changed to more explicitly accommodate developers through incentives like mixed use zoning - as a response to this reduction in government spending on urban development and urban renewal programs (Knox 1993). Though large scale civic projects sponsored by government agencies are still undertaken, they are often the result of partnerships between various public (or crown) and private corporations, and are often intended as catalysts in order to serve underlying objectives of economic development (Scott Brown 1990, p.22). Examples of these kinds of projects in the Canadian urban context include waterfront

redevelopments, large hotel and convention complexes, and downtown revitalization projects. These range from False Creek in Vancouver to the \$100 million Market Square project in Saint John, New Brunswick, and Winnipeg's Core Area Initiative. The practice of urban planning has thus undergone a transition from a previously passive, reactive, and regulatory mode to a much more proactive and developmental role in the late 1980s and 1990s, with an as yet undetermined measure of success (Kiernan 1990, p.14).

The increasingly fluid patterns of private investment and capital accumulation have also created greater inter-urban competition, as metropolises compete to attract corporate investment, employment opportunities, and new sources of revenue. As a result, cities are being 'reimagined' through city image campaigns, combating modernist conceptions of the universal and uniform nature of urban centres through the tools of marketing and advertising. Local authorities and the private sector often collaborate to 'sell' this image to enterprises, tourists, and local inhabitants through promotional literature produced by tourist offices, chambers of commerce, and economic development authorities. In this context, places are now offered up as "bundles of social and economic opportunity", with the economic difficulties experienced by municipalities seen as best solved through a mobilization of local resources of private capital, self-help and entrepreneurship (Philo and Kearns 1993, p.18).

The advent of this inter-urban competition and the selling of cities has been variably linked to a large array of lifestyle changes, and consumer-based innovations, as well as a large number of cultural forms; all of which are seen as promoters of the tendency towards more flexible modes of accumulation (Harvey 1987, p.265). Clearly,

there is a connection between this destabilization or increasing placelessness of cities in a globalized space of flows of information, money products, money capital, and people, and the renewed attention paid to the 'unique' cultural identities of individual urban centers. With competition no longer limited to issues related to economic opportunity or employment market suitability, there has been a "postmodern reenchantment" of the built environment, in the form of a conscious and deliberate invocation and selected interpretation of local history and tradition (Robins 1991, p.3). It is the production of this kind of 'cultural capital' which Mike Featherstone identifies as a pervasive theme in a postmodern urban landscape characterized by "a return to culture, style, and decoration within the confines of a 'no place-space' in which traditional senses of culture are decontextualized, simulated, reduplicated, and continually renewed and restyled" (Featherstone 1991). The ideological project of place marketing generates effects that Marxist urban theorists also identify with the growth of an urban-based bourgeoisie and the spatial reconfiguration of urban populations, leading to increasingly highly stylized modes of consumption, the gentrification of many inner city neighborhoods, a hierarchical differentiation of the built environment, and the revival of a number of pre-Fordist spatial forms in cities, such as industrial quarters and districts (Cooke 1990, p.340).

The contemporary design of the built environment and of urban public space reflect these changes, as an increasingly wide range of (re)developments have been attributed to the 'capitalist' project of postmodernity and place marketing in the city. In terms of architecture, Jameson's accounts of postmodern 'hyperspaces' (such as

Portman's Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles) detail this new urban space as a miniature world devoid of meaning, where "no larger protopolitical utopian transformation is either expected or desired" - spaces of ornamentation and of a particularly contrived depthlessness (Jameson 1988). Playfulness, parody, pastiche, and extensive historical quotation have all become part of this organization of 'spectacular' urban space as a means of attracting capital and people. David Harvey's critical reading of architectural practices in Baltimore, New Orleans, and New York City identifies "fiction, fragmentation, collage, and eclecticism, all suffused with a sense of ephemerality and chaos" as the prevailing themes of contemporary architecture and urban design (Harvey 1989, p.98).

Many new corporate developments are routinely masked behind a language which speaks of the public realm in order to make projects appear to be promoters of local traditions and interests through an art of 'dissimulation' which mixes the public and private spheres together in new and unanticipated ways. The result has been the evolution of a new promotional space in which the production of certain 'civic' values is duly highlighted (Boyer 1993). These specially designed environments often adopt symbolic codes filled with reiterations, revitalizations, and recyclings, becoming background environments or containers for new shopping malls and food-oriented entertainment areas (Boyer 1988, p.55). Those public spaces most closely associated with modernity - in the form of large urban parks and city streets - are now being replaced by a safer, less diverse, and more aesthetically pleasing vision of civility bounded by commercial consumption and shaped by the advent of the private theme park (a point reinforced by the deployment of

'Disney' metaphors to describe a plethora of corporate interventions in the new urban landscape) (Zukin 1995, p.262).

In this apparently and increasingly self-conscious manipulation of culture, public art has become a critical component of the reinvention of city spaces; as something created in order to beautify, enhance, unify, and enforce the reinvention of a version of the 'public' while producing "a sense of order and communal feeling through spatial organization and decorative beauty" (Deutsche 1986, p.78). Public art is therefore seen as providing a kind of democratic legitimacy to redevelopment programs designed primarily to transform cities to facilitate greater capital accumulation and/or state control. Many of these new large-scale artistic interventions are sited in close proximity to new office developments, festival market places, and parks, and are a celebration of a version of culture and history that is often severed from context and devoid of meaning (Philo and Kearns 1993, p.24). To support this critique of art in public places, theorists rely to a considerable extent on the experience of New York City, as a place where the adoption of precisely these kinds of aesthetic and cultural strategies have reached new and unprecedented levels, as have their oppositional responses. In Manhattan's Lower East Side, artists and artistic 'products' have been linked to the displacement of large numbers of people (through gentrification) and have ostensibly led to a further gutting of the public realm, as city spaces and architectural forms become complicit in the hegemonical domination of urban spaces and urban meanings (Deutsche 1984, 1986).

The 'Place' of Art in the Public Interest

Given this account of the contemporary city, it would appear as though there are very few if any opportunities available for the deployment of aesthetic strategies which are committed to an exploration of values associated with more directly democratic and participatory activities - in terms of both engaging with audiences and confronting critical concerns like legitimacy and accessibility. There is no doubt that public art can be and is appropriated by various actors to present and promote specific meanings, identities, and versions of collective memory, as well as to appeal to the specific taste cultures of urban elite groups (Philo and Kearns, 1993, p.24). Nonetheless, there does exist a multiplicity of alternative artistic practices which can less easily be attributed entirely to the machinations of selling and consuming. These include everything from the radical activities of the Situationist International in the 1950s, to the politically charged poster and media campaigns of gay and lesbian activists, the self-affirmative practices of racial and ethnic groups, the creation of a community garden on derelict land, and the painting of murals on the sides of downtown buildings. These kinds of aesthetic practices continue to inform the visual landscape and the public spaces of the contemporary city, and represent important and unique subjects of analysis and critique.

The focus of this thesis is on a consideration of what might constitute an 'art in the public interest' which can be employed as a tool for reconstructing and redefining urban communities and urban spaces in new and important ways in the context of the Nation's Capital. The work of activist artists and alternative organizations continue to have a vital

role in the opening up of public spaces “where the lessons of participatory democracy can be relearned and its history reexamined” (Trend 1989, p.4). The process of commissioning and siting ‘art in public places’ continues to be influenced by these strategies, and the programs and policies of the three government agencies being considered at this time, to varying degrees, reflect these contributions. Public art increasingly offers opportunities to empower communities and, along with other efforts to expand and explode traditional (and outdated) conceptions of ‘public participation’ in urban planning, has important ramifications for the ways cities are designed, as well as who is involved and who has power in the decision-making process.

CHAPTER TWO: A BRIEF HISTORY OF PUBLIC ART

Introduction

Historically, the image most strongly associated with public art in urban space has been that of monumental sculpture - often in the form of large-scale formalist memorials to historically significant events and figures. Since the 1960s, however, the terrain of public art has expanded to include an increasingly diverse array of themes, processes, and materials. The ways in which contemporary projects are theorized have also changed; from an object-centered emphasis on materials and the relationship of sculpture to architecture (Holman 1993, p.653) to an often more careful consideration of context, audience response, and the structures of power and representation embodied within the work.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of this transformation of the role, function, and meaning of public art, in an effort to identify appropriate analytical tools that will be instructive when engaging with recent initiatives in Canada's National Capital. Tracing this evolution, largely in the American context, requires the recognition of two distinct traditions which have impacted on each other as well as on the kind of work that is being commissioned and created in the contemporary city. These include government funded and administrated art in public places programs and 'new genre' public art or art in the public interest, which demand a more careful rethinking of the relationship between the artist, members of the public, and the site itself. Finally, a broad overview of recent directions in public art in Canada will be considered, including the kinds of programs that are in place, the prevalent themes and issues that are being

addressed, and the possibilities that exist, at present, for more open, participatory, design processes.

As previously mentioned, much of what has generally been considered to be public art has come about as the result of civic and municipal efforts to commission work for outdoor places. These permanent installations, designed in an effort to provide a means of beautifying and/or enhancing existing open areas, have changed rather dramatically, in terms of both the subject matter as well as the physical form of the commission, since the 1960s. Initially inspired by a modernist tradition of idealized urban form, these initiatives have more recently been influenced and contradicted by alternative visions of public art originating from very different historic and artistic traditions which emphasize the importance of political and social activism. The resultant redefinition of concepts like 'collaboration' and 'community' repositions public space, in its many forms, as a venue that is increasingly open to appropriation, re-interpretation, and contestation.

For art historian W.J.T. Mitchell, this ideological divide is representative of the dialectic of 'utopian' and 'critical' relations between art and its public(s): between "art that attempts to raise up an ideal public sphere, a nonsite, an imaginary landscape" and "art that disrupts the image of a pacified, utopian public sphere, that exposes contradictions and adopts an ironic, subversive relation to the public it addresses, and the public space where it appears" (Mitchell 1992, p.3). Following from this distinction, each of the two approaches to aesthetic intervention and the urban landscape implies a different relationship and response to art, architecture, urban design, and other forces which are

continuously shaping the built environment. It is the nature of these differences that will inform this exploration and analysis of the history of public art.

Art in Public Places

Prior to the 1960s, public sculpture in North America could, for the most part, be characterized by memorials to historical figures and events, as well as by pictorial representations of 'civic virtues' (Sennie 1992, p.7). Based largely on European (Renaissance) precedents, these projects utilized classical imagery, realist representations, ornamental embellishments, and traditional materials at an often monumental scale. This kind of sculpture (desultorily referred to as the 'hero on a horse' or 'cannon in the park' variety) occupied a position of unprecedented importance in civic squares and other ceremonial open spaces, often in conjunction with additional ornamental landscape design elements and the complimentary architectural features of adjacent building facades. Much of this traditional figurative sculpture carried with it the assumption that the community within which it was situated existed as a historical continuity with values that were shared by all of its citizens (Sennie, p.15). The reality, however, was that many of these neo-classical statues held little meaning for many people (Carr et al 1992, p.268) and that many of these evocations would subsequently be accompanied by competing or conflicting meanings and historical interpretations (Mayo 1988, p.8).

Perhaps the most common examples of sculpture from this period are the plethora of war memorials from World War I and World War II which continue to occupy a position of geographical and symbolic centrality in many Canadian and American towns

and cities. They are intended to serve the specific social function of commemorating the heroic contribution of those who died in battle while attempting to recognize both the human cost of conflict and the virtues of peace and reconciliation (1). The difficulty in achieving these ambitions lies in the successful conveyance of an effective and meaningful message to community members who may have little or no context for a remembrance of past events, however important, that are expressed in an artistic style which may appear static, outdated, and irrelevant. This is not to suggest that there is no place for remembrance and history in the urban landscape, rather that attention, in the recent history of art and public places, has increasingly been focused on a re-thinking of the form and function of memorial sculpture. Works like Maya Lin's 1982 *Vietnam Veteran's Memorial* in Washington D.C. are illustrative of the challenges presented by this symbolic reinterpretation of what a memorial is and does (Griswold 1992, p.89) (2).

As previously mentioned, the recent history of art in public places can be traced to the 1960s, a time of considerable social change and upheaval in North American urban centres. Urban renewal projects of the day were directed towards attempts to address many of the problems that had come to be associated with urban spaces, and provisions for a public art component to these redevelopment schemes were often included as part of the solution. In particular, public sculpture was seen as a means of enlivening the public realm and as a way of 'humanizing' the urban environment. Unfortunately, the predominance (at that time) of International Style architecture - with its unadorned glass and steel facade construction, sterile corporate plazas, and imposing skyscrapers, resulted in a lack of recognition of the need for an integration of architecture and public use. The

consequence was that artistic elements were usually added after construction had been completed and the final product was often comprised of abstract elements which were completely foreign to large segments of the general population who “now had to contend with it in the spaces they used daily” (Senie and Webster 1992, p.xiv.). Modern art had essentially moved out of a gallery environment into a context where the physical expression of abstract and conceptual creative practice was unfamiliar and greeted with caution and trepidation.

These projects were largely realized through the combined presence of space and patronage, essential components of the equation which were present in the late 1960s in amounts sufficiently large enough to provide an impetus for commissioning a variety of works for outdoor public places. Space, which became obtainable as a result of massive urban redevelopment schemes, and patronage, in the form of government funds made available to commission art, would soon become synonymous with the display of art in public places. Much of this work was representative of the tastes and interests of narrowly defined social and cultural groups. These were comprised primarily of members of elite social classes, and reflected their particular aesthetic choices. As a result, public art, at that time, functioned “as an emblem of culture and a manifestation of economic wealth, a sign of the power of its patron” (Senie and Webster 1992, p.xiv). Often the choice of sculpture to be commissioned was based on the fame of the artist, and although government programs promised the promotion of ‘public’ rather than private interests, many of these works were art monuments, not cultural monuments, and were no more

symbolic of contemporary society and conveyed no larger meaning than what had come before (City of Toronto 1991, p.27).

This 'plop art' or 'turd in the park' style of public art also presented a whole range of challenges for both the community and the artist in relation to the 'public' work of art. The prevalence of surrealist and conceptually inspired themes, and an inability to build to proper scale, may have contributed to the public's apprehension towards, and the stigma attached to, the notion of this primarily decorative and/or ornamental art that soon occupied many of the everyday spaces of city centers across North America (3). Public responses were therefore framed by controversy and calls for the offending object's removal, and were often broadened to incorporate responses to the "inadequacies" of the architectural spaces and urban sites in which they were located (City of Toronto, p.27). As a result, this perception of a 'public be damned' attitude amongst artists and administrators fostered calls for a more viewer-friendly public art (Elsen 1989, p.293). Despite the voracity of such public outcries, many of the objects that were most harshly criticized upon their initial installation were eventually absorbed without controversy into the existing visual landscape (Sennie 1992, p.146). In some cases these early works became enduring symbols of the cities in which they were located. Perhaps the greatest example of this transition from widespread ridicule to source of civic pride is Picasso's *Head of a Woman*, commissioned in 1967 (Elsen 1992, p.292) for the City of Chicago (4).

Artists selected for commissions were also dissatisfied with these early efforts to develop and create 'public' works of art, although for fundamentally different reasons. Interestingly, many artists felt "boxed in" (City of Toronto 1991, p.27) by their relative

lack of autonomy and involvement within the decision-making process as well as by the narrow range of critical choices that they were permitted to entertain. The arbitrary budgets that they were assigned and were expected to operate within were also seen as obstacles to ensuring the creative and artistic success of a given project, as was the fact that they became involved in the process after many of the critical decisions had already been taken. Artists associated with art in public places programs were primarily concerned with challenging expectations about the nature of public sculpture rather than with creating accessible people-oriented symbols, and it was this 'public-be-damned' attitude, with a debate focusing on individual artistic styles rather than public values, that best characterized the sensibility of public art programs at that time (Lacy 1995, p.22).

By the 1970s and 1980s, many of the original imperatives behind the adoption of public art programs and the creation of significant new projects had subsided. As urban governments faced changing fiscal, political, and cultural priorities, the administrative aims of public art programs witnessed a shift away from over-arching social and aesthetic goals towards more modest economic aspirations. Increasingly, a proposal had to be 'sold' as part of broader public infrastructure improvements, or was tied to the encouragement of large-scale private development (Carr 1992, p.293). The most widely cited example of this shift towards the creation of promotional spaces and the production of city images is the public art and open space system at Battery Park City in Lower Manhattan, a project completed in the late 1980s (Boyer 1993). An incredibly large and costly real estate venture that combined upscale residential, commercial, and office elements, Battery Park City was seen alternatively as a triumph of public policy, public space, urban design, and

city planning or as a “ghettoized and exclusionary” example of the eclipse of social use by the interests of business and real estate (Deutsche 1991, p.202). In addition to this significant transformation, many previously held assumptions about how the process was undertaken were also revisited and revised, with ramifications for the contentious relationship that continues to exist between the artist, the audience, and the site itself.

The recent history of art in public places has witnessed a broadening of the themes, subject matter, artistic style, and media in which public artwork is executed. Influenced by the artistic heritage of land and environmental art as well as the notion of site-specificity, many artists began responding in new ways to the particular circumstances of the urban milieu in which they were working. Figurative or metaphorical attention to the historical, ecological, and sociological aspects of the site is now much more commonplace, as is an explicit recognition of its physical characteristics. Stemming from an apparent effort to encourage greater connectedness between the work of art and the general population by engaging audiences in new ways, there are many examples of this effort to provide for a heightened connectivity to site. These include work commissioned for Battery Park City in 1988, such as Mary Miss’ *South Cove* land reclamation project which looked at the connection between earth, air, and water, as well as Nancy Holt’s *Dark Star Park*, completed in Virginia in 1984, which attempted to portray the intimate connection between the urban site and nature (Marter 1989, p.317) (5). Although this approach endeavours to successfully create a greater degree of symmetry between public sculpture and community, this is not an easy task - particularly at a time of increasing pluralism and deeper social and economic divisions in North American cities.

Municipal public art programs have also been influenced by the ideas of functionality and use value, most directly as a response to the physical and intellectual distance created through the three-dimensional execution of abstract and conceptual artistic themes (Senie 1992, p.215). The construction of amphitheatres and gathering places, as well as a variety of other urban amenities, including chairs, fences, bus shelters, and assorted streetscape embellishments, were characteristic of these efforts to increase the use value and enhance the enjoyment of public spaces. Associated with many redevelopment schemes in American and Canadian downtowns, these kinds of projects are fairly widespread, and have met with varying degrees of success and/or failure. Indeed, many of the hard treeless landscapes that were created from these efforts became simply unused or dead spaces with no greater relation to site or location than the more artistically 'complex' work that they were intended to improve upon (Balmori 1993, p.41) while those that were substantially more successful encouraged active engagement through the combination of a number of different elements (Carr 1992, p.115). Part of the difficulty of placing an emphasis solely on use value, as Harriet Senie articulates, is that an urban amenity, on its own, is not necessarily art. It is only when both physical and spiritual concerns are successfully addressed that public sculpture makes a meaningful contribution to public life and art, transcending the inherent limitations of the formula (Senie 1992, p.215).

Another of the key concepts present in public art theory and practice over the past twenty years has been the repeated invocation of the necessity for collaboration. Primarily in reference to the formation of beneficial linkages between artists and an array of urban

design professionals (including architects, planners, and designers), collaboration was seen as a means of addressing the difficulties that had come to characterize the working relationships of the public art experience. As a response to concerns raised by artists over the difficulty of working within the constraints of the prescribed formula, collaboration was seen as a means of providing “a more organic and egalitarian promise ... for a new, collective vision” (Design+Values 1993, p.30). This move towards the formal inclusion of artists earlier on in the commissioning process was closely linked to the advent of postmodern architecture and its heightened emphasis on building style and aesthetic elements (Marter 1989, p.315), more integrated urban design practices, and more detailed percent-for-art guidelines in many urban centers

Although these efforts toward collaboration grew more commonplace throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the full creative and cooperative promise was rarely realized (Lacy 1995, p.22). Many of the critiques of such collaborative efforts questioned the real measure of shared responsibility that existed among the participants, and whether or not alternative visions were ever actually entertained as plausible propositions for the public and/or private site (City of Toronto 1991, p.29). Similarly problematic was the absence of representation from community workers and members of the general public as ‘collaborators’ on the design team. Despite the fact that the need for user involvement in the process appears to be increasingly self-evident, the recent growth of public art education programs addresses only one component of the commissioning process. In order to evaluate the success of a particular collaborative effort, artist Nancy Holt identifies three levels of cooperation; conceptual, correlative, and cooperative. They

articulate a progression, from an autonomous yet complementary interaction between the artist and the architect to the creation of a 'working team' that includes architects, sculptors, engineers, and community workers working in partnership (Marter 1989, p.315). Despite the fact that the full cooperative potential of the design process is rarely realized, collaboration has become a central tenet of municipal public art programs, and may still "prove to be the most critical vehicle for the design of new parks and public spaces" (Balmori 1993, p.44).

The evolution and growth of art in public places over the past thirty years has witnessed a number of significant changes in the way that artistic elements are situated in the urban milieu. The continued importance of and struggle to define collaboration, the difficulties of combining artistic expression and the need for intellectually accessible and functional urban amenities, as well as an engagement with a diverse array of themes and materials all represent the increasing importance of public art. They also exemplify the difficulty of determining exactly what the term means in a time of unprecedented fragmentation of the public sphere and increasingly blurred distinctions between public and private space. The question of how best to communicate and establish a dialogue with this complex 'public' remains the single greatest challenge facing the field of public art today (Senie and Webster 1992, p.xv), and it is a challenge that has been taken up in earnest by practitioners and theoreticians of 'new genre' public art, as a response to perceived inadequacies inherent in the art in public places project.

Art in the Public Interest

Entirely distinct from art in public places, 'new genre' public art is located at the physical and ideological periphery of the official, largely permanent, government sponsored monument and sculpture previously discussed. A term recently coined by artist Suzanne Lacy to encompass a broad range of artistic sensibilities, 'new genre' public art draws on an alternative history mediated through the work of artists and activists who have a common interest in "leftist politics, social activism, redefined audiences, relevance for (marginalized) communities and collaborative methodology"(Lacy 1995, p.25). These interventions draw on the legacy of a variety of twentieth-century avant-garde practices which questioned the relationship between capitalism, cultural systems, institutional structures, 'everyday life', and the built environment through a variety of artistic means which included, but were not limited to, the production of physical objects (Wodiczko 1987, p.43). As a result, unconventional forms of expression and temporary or informal venues have come to be employed in an attempt to problematize and/or oppose the bureaucratic aestheticism and the rhetorical notions of universal access and social accountability that are embodied in the terminology, policy, and official documentation of art in public places. An exploration of the historical precedents for this new public art and a critical examination of the characteristics that define its aesthetic are therefore imperative to a highlighting of the similarities and differences that exist between an art 'for public places' and an art that endeavors to more accurately reflect the diversity and complexity of the public interest. Of particular relevance to this discussion is how 'new genre' public art attempts to redefine public participation in order to foster greater community involvement.

Many of the historical precedents for 'new genre' public art can be traced to the rise of artistic production as a distinct consumptive sphere within capitalism, a development generally associated with the modernist period, and the Marxist critiques of this system first generated in Europe earlier this century. This institutionalization and commodification forced a dualistic distinction between art and everyday life that "ghettoized human activity to legitimate artistic environments" (Bonnett 1992, p.69). The resultant separation of art and life and the loss of autonomy experienced by the artist fostered the activities of a number of successive avant-garde projects which rejected the constraints of the existing cultural system and attempted to formulate an oppositional creative response.

Strategies of direct public participation, media art, and critical public art were first employed in Europe by the Dadaists, the Surrealists, and the Situationists, among others, as a means of contesting these dominant capitalist social formations (Wodiczko 1987, p.43). The ideological position of Dadaism, characterised by an embrace of antiart and indifference, subverted the notion that creativity must necessarily be a specialized activity confined to specialized spaces, and expressed contempt for the status quo and the capitalist commodification of art. This view manifested itself primarily through the staging of cabaret events in clubs and public halls in Zurich and Berlin after 1915 and remained a movement largely fuelled by artistic ideology, unable to emancipate itself from the restricted terrain of aestheticism (Bonnett 1992, p.73). Subsequently, the work of the Surrealists emphasized spontaneity, chance, and the liberation of the unconscious through the development of alternative forms of cultural production while also affirming the notion

of the artist as a uniquely imaginative and eccentric visionary, possessing a natural instinct for creativity. Although their work, created in the Paris of the 1920s, was rife with a rhetoric of revolution that prioritised the spirit of revolt, this implicit support for leftist political causes and the “metaphysics of the provocateur” (Plant 1992, p.52) translated into limited success when asserting influence outside of the spheres of literature and art (Plant 1990, p.5).

Emanating from this continued mediation of the relationship between art and politics in the context of postwar French Marxism, the subsequent activities of Guy Debord and the Situationist International, in the 1950s and 1960s, recognized the danger of confining avant-garde techniques and tactics solely to literary and artistic genres, and the constant danger represented by the co-optation of critical discourse, aesthetic expression, and resistant subcultures by an increasingly adaptive cultural economy (Maayan 1989, p.51, Crow 1983, p.252). As a result, their reading of the built environment and of urban design involved the employment of a number of strategies (including both *détournement* - a politics based on illicit appropriation and the *derive* - a confrontation with passive receptions of the city) which collectively represented “a concerted overtly politically directed attack on the inadequacy of current uses and conceptions of everyday space”(Bonnett 1992, p.76). Although the work of the Situationists was unique in its self critical struggle to abandon art and artistic ideologies, as well as in its creative engagement with urban space, they experienced difficulties not unlike other avant-garde groups in their efforts to evade recuperation and appropriation,

as well as in their ultimate failure to engage with a significant proportion of the general population.

Although the philosophies of Guy Debord and the Situationist International languished in relative obscurity soon after the failed Paris student uprisings of 1968, there have been a number of more recent (if somewhat superficial) engagements with their critique of spectacular society and mass consumption, particularly among the disciplines of art history, political theory, and urban geography. These explorations emphasize the shared theoretical horizons of Situationism and poststructuralism in their attempt to assert a discourse of alienation and authenticity within a structure of “totalised reification” (Bonnett 1989, p.142). The tenuous nature of this project highlights the improbability of legitimation faced by any contemporary critical discourse or oppositional strategy arising in an internal relation to its object (Plant 1990, p.8). This kind of dilemma continues to frame much of the work of cultural theorists, public artists, and social activists today, as they attempt to formulate an effective and sustained critique of existing social, political, spatial, and economic relations, while operating within a framework defined by those relations.

Other historical precedents for the alternative public art being produced today are to be found in a legacy of artistic practices in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere, in the last thirty five years. Events known as ‘Happenings’ first challenged the conventions of the gallery and the museum through an emphasis on chance encounters and unrehearsed collaborations between a diverse array of artists, musicians, and other performers in the early 1960s. These interdisciplinary ‘excursions’ made use of a variety of unorthodox

materials, subject matter, and alternative venues, and relied on the more direct participation of audience members in order to construct a *collage* of random events (Goldberg 1988, p.128). In this context, the focus shifted significantly, from “knowing more and more about what art was to wondering about what life was, the meaning of life” (Lacy 1995, p.26).

Building on this ‘radical’ heritage of experimentation and critical collaboration, a more explicit engagement with non-traditional media and mass culture followed in the 1970s and 1980s, in an effort to raise consciousness, build coalitions, and to expand and educate audiences. The activist work of feminist artists like Judy Chicago, as well as the work of artists from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including the community murals of Judith Baca, pioneered an articulation of a new politics of identity and community. Dolores Hayden’s work with The Power of Place (a community organization she founded in 1984) on the *Biddy Mason Project*, a unique combination of public art and urban history, provides a valuable example of how the social and economic struggles of ordinary people can be remembered and preserved as part of the mosaic of contemporary city life. The piece, in the form of a permanent wall, chronicles the life and times of Biddy Mason, a woman of colour who lived in California in the 1800s. It encompasses her emancipation from slavery, her career as a midwife, and her connectedness to members of the African American community in Los Angeles today (Hayden 1994) (6). By providing a more comprehensive theoretical and social analysis of their work, and its relation to the urban landscape, these artists exemplify a continued movement towards an expansion of the critical and popular terrain of art in the public interest (Lacy 1995, p.26).

New forms of "community art" (Raven 1989, p.4) that have evolved over the past ten years have perpetuated this effort to reveal and document the situation of disadvantaged or traditionally underrepresented societal groups. By placing an emphasis on a methodology based on humanitarian values, social justice, critical inquiry, and calls for political action, this work also raises important questions about the role of art and artists in the urban milieu. Although there are obvious pitfalls involved in articulating characteristics of a genre which seemingly defies categorization, much of the critical public art that has recently evolved can be (at least partially) defined by new forms of collaboration, linkages to contemporary social movements, and a commitment to temporary installation, unconventional sites, and the use of non-traditional media..

In the 1980s and 1990s, partly in response to deepening health and ecological crises (including the onset of the AIDS crisis, pollution, and environmental destruction), cultural censorship, and continuing racial discrimination and gender inequity, artists began working with an expanded variety of communities in the public sphere, in order to inform and challenge audiences as well as to work for social change. Collaborations with the homeless and unemployed, the elderly, gays, lesbians, and prison populations, as well as labour and peace groups, have all recognized the potential role of the artist in challenging notions of privilege and bias traditionally associated with artistic practice (Lacy 1995, p.31). Unlike the collaborative models of art in public places, which are largely defined by the activities of the design team, collaboration in this new context places a priority on communication and the collective relationship that exists between the artist and a multiplicity of audiences. Community involvement increasingly becomes the raw material

of artistic practice (Phillips 1995, p.67). Regardless of the physical form taken by these strategies, a critical element of this redefined partnership between artists and non-artists is the role of documentation. In the production of alternative public discourses and counter-representations, documentation can provide an effective tool for artists to mediate between those who experience a situation and those who view it. By accurately engaging with the issues and concerns of specific communities, this kind of project ostensibly allows the artist to create work that can avoid betraying people: an interested art practice which does not simply “merge itself into its object” (Rosler 1991, p.35).

By attempting to broaden the ‘public’ function of art, and by opening up ‘unofficial’ spaces outside and within institutions, this ‘new’ genre has also been closely linked to the activities of ‘new’ social movements, particularly through the latter’s use of strategies which combat stigmatizing representations, develop non-traditional audiences, and serve the needs of particular communities while remaining “rooted in concrete ethical and cultural struggles” (Yudice 1993, p.227). Many of these community organizations operate outside conventional political parties and institutions, and use civic space and public sculpture as venues to educate, inform, and incite. The contestatory work of ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and the ACT UP art collective (known as Gran Fury) from 1986 to 1992 is one of the most highly visible (and well documented) examples of this phenomenon (Meyer 1995). Their numerous public education poster campaigns (which have included graphic design elements such as the “SILENCE=DEATH” slogan, the ubiquitous pink triangle logo, and posters devoted to the hows and whys of safer sex) as well as staged events and demonstrations (including

'die-ins' to protest the high cost of drug treatments), have been instrumental in furthering the agenda of 'queer' politics and AIDS activism in New York City and other large urban centers (7). Although the importance of this work clearly lies in its commitment to social and political action, it also signifies an increased blurring of the lines between what is considered 'art' and what is considered activism or 'non-art'.

Not surprisingly, many of these alternative approaches are also characterized by an aesthetic which adopts public space primarily as a venue for temporary site specific interventions. As a result, visual projections, poster campaigns, murals, graffiti, music, and popular theatre have all been variously pursued as site specific "informal modes of action" that foster collaborative engagements between artists and communities (Lees 1994, p.461). In this sense, critical public art becomes primarily a forum for "investigation, articulation, and constructive reappraisal" (Phillips 1992, p.296) rather than a permanent solution to chronic and recurring urban problems. Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection* (1986) is widely cited in public art discourses as an example of this commitment to the temporary. His efforts to highlight the relationship between homelessness, gentrification, and urban redevelopment in New York City involved the appropriation of existing monuments and buildings in a downtown neighbourhood undergoing revitalization. Images of the homeless and objects related to their everyday lives were reproduced for short periods of time onto the surface of figurative statues - in order to heighten their visual impact while attempting to avoid their recuperation as a beautifying or decorative spectacle (8). Through the use of this temporary intervention,

Wodiczko attempted to physically represent the contradiction between "capital's need to exploit space for profit and the social needs of the city's residents" (Deutsche 1986, p.94).

What becomes abundantly clear in any attempt to summarize this new avant-garde and a politically engaged art that more accurately reflects the plurality of the public interest, is the incredible diversity of creative processes that this movement has come to encompass. Various included in this category of aesthetic practice is everything from the NAMES Project Quilt (a potent symbol of the human tragedy of AIDS) (Crichton 1992) and the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles as the artist-in-residence at New York City's Sanitation Department (Phillips 1989), to the confrontational political activities of the Guerilla Girls - a deliberately anonymous group of feminist artists, art critics, and provocateurs working to "combat sexism and racism in the art world" (Lacy 1995, p.225). These efforts to open up new forms of collaboration, to address issues of political action and social transformation, and to adopt the use of temporary venues, collectively represent a clear broadening of the scope of what constitutes public art in the 1990s. However, although this engagement with multiple audiences and a highlighting of the relationship between art production and democratic participation (Phillips 1995, p.67) are significant developments, there remain many questions that are not so easily answered.

As a relatively recent, open, and still evolving discourse, this kind of broad-based community art symbolizes a discipline that has not yet reached maturity, and continues to be plagued by unresolved internal tensions. Suzanne Lacy identifies the need for a more thorough analysis of the work of 'new genre' public artists, replacing the primarily descriptive constructs of contemporary commentary and criticism with a more appropriate

language and terminology - in order to reflect the scope of current aesthetic practices and to effectively articulate the changing relationship between artists and audiences. The problematic dichotomy that exists between an emphasis on social goals and a focus on aesthetic intentions also belies an inherent instability in the problematic, and as yet poorly defined, role of the artist as a social catalyst rather than as an image-maker (Phillips 1995, p.67).

A further ideological critique is linked to the challenge of evaluation and to the inevitable absorption of contemporary avant-garde artistic practice within the apparatus of the cultural economy - an ideological debate that originated with the work of the historical avant-gardes and continues today. For Paul Mann and other contemporary Marxist cultural theorists, the oppositional, subversive intent of the forms of representation characteristic of "postmodern neo-critical art" is negated by the inevitable recuperation of its images as vacuous oppositional gestures. In an urban milieu characterized by increasingly flexible and sophisticated consumption, Mann contends that any representation of the disadvantaged, the oppressed, or the 'other', regardless of its intent, can neither attain an appropriate critical distance nor avoid circulation as a discursive commodity - as long as it continues to be complicit in the functioning of the art system (Mann 1991, p.144). Although Mann limits his reading of 'new genre' public art only to certain kinds of interventions (looking specifically at the work of Hans Haacke and Barbara Kruger) it is indicative of a larger Marxist critique of 'subversive' art and artists which refuses to be resolved. Perhaps in order to escape the "traps of art", alternative

public artists may be forced to completely evade their profession in order to produce a critical art that would be neither critical nor art (Rosler 1987, p.9).

From the Margins to the Mainstream?

What becomes clear from this cursory study of art in public places and art in the public interest is the distinctive histories and characteristics of each tradition. Despite their obvious differences, both of them are concerned, either directly or indirectly, with an engagement with, and a 'shaping' of, the existing urban landscape. They are also both heavily reliant on a rhetorical language that tends to overstate the political, social, and/or cultural meaning of specific projects. While art in public places literature makes assumptions about the public interest and public participation, and "implicitly endorses the legitimacy of government's control of expressions in public spaces" (Solnit 1992, p.26), documentation of 'new genre' public art invokes an alternative language of contestation, political activism, and appropriation which calls for a more honest and sustained critical examination of artists who are engaged in political activities. Regardless of the shortcomings of the various strategies employed by 'new genre' public art, their work does illustrate a firm commitment to expanding and challenging notions of the 'public' interest, to temporality, to multiple conceptions of audiences, and to collaborative methodologies. Many of these issues are increasingly connected to a re-shaping of the agenda of official public art programs in many North American cities, and recent initiatives in Seattle, Chicago, Toronto, and Ottawa have all illustrated how the ideals of political

and artistic engagement associated with art in the public interest have had a fundamental impact on municipal design programs.

Rather than identifying these practices as categories diametrically opposed to each other, it may be more useful to identify their heightened connectivity by placing them along a continuum of engagement based on new conceptions of what should and what can be accomplished. State-sponsored public art initiatives, despite their administrative and procedural limitations, do have relevance for a contemporary approach to urban design issues. Although art in public places, as a discourse, may not provide “the necessary theoretical or practical horizon of inquiry” (Mitchell 1992, p.2), in tandem with the critical perspectives of ‘new genre’ public art, a meaningful and contemporary exploration of public art can be articulated. This kind of theoretical and practical redefinition is tantamount to a recognition of the increasing diversity of artistic expression and to a fostering of broader public participation through greater user involvement and more effective public art education programs. It is this issue of how best to establish a dialogue, to generate debate, and to communicate with this complex public “that remains the single greatest challenge facing public art today” (Senie and Webster 1992, p.xv).

Public Art in Canada

In comparison with the plethora of recent efforts to describe, document, and explain the shifting landscape of public art in The United States, Canadian projects, as an *oeuvre*, have received a minimal amount of critical and popular attention, and this is particularly true for interventions located outside of Metropolitan Toronto. As a result,

any effort to document their recent history requires the piecing together of fragments from a wide variety of sources. Contemporary public art in Canada, although descendant from the same aesthetic heritage and faced with similar dilemmas as its American counterpart, is also differentiated by structures and processes that are unique to the Canadian urban experience. Unlike the precipitous urban decay that provided much of the initial impetus for artistic interventions in the downtowns of American cities in the 1960s, Canadian government agencies and urban centers have implemented public art policies primarily in order to beautify and/or enliven the barrenness that is characteristic of the contemporary urban landscape. Such a project has entailed an effort “not to transform utter devastation, but to revitalize terminal stodge” (Drainie 1989, p.46). This brief consideration of recent art in public places and art in the public interest initiatives is intended primarily to focus the debate and discussion on the specifically Canadian context of the three programs and projects which will be examined in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

In 1964, the first one-per-cent-for-art program was implemented by the Federal Government’s Department of Public Works (DPW), which devoted a fraction of the budget of all new federal buildings open to the public across the country (everything from airports to office buildings) to the display of works of art. The DPW scheme had an art advisory committee which consisted of equal numbers of art experts and architects, with the architect of the specific building in question having the power to nominate artists. Problems arose from the unwieldy nature of this administrative body as well as from a lack of consultation on the management and maintenance of the completed installations (Lambton 1994, p.9). The sculpture acquisition programs of the federally-funded Canada

Council's Art Bank (and the circulation of pieces from its permanent collection throughout the country on a cost-recovery basis) and the National Capital Commission followed in the early 1970s. Provincial 'percent for art' programs were mandated in the late 1970s in Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and elsewhere, and these also involved the devotion of a specific budgetary allocation for artistic elements, partly as a response to the federal government's abandonment of their public art program in 1978.

Despite the continuation of most of these acquisition programs in some form into the 1990s, the majority of public art activities in Canada are now undertaken by agencies of urban governments. These programs range from fully developed and implemented public art policies in larger metropolitan centers like Toronto and Ottawa, to informal local initiatives in smaller municipalities (including the historic murals of Athens, Ontario and Chemainus, B.C.) (Babinska 1994, p.13). The structure of these programs varies from place to place, however they are generally based on the provision of a percentage of the construction costs of new development to the creation of permanent public art works. Only Toronto's capital program receives its funding from an allocation approved by City Council "for projects proposed in connection with civic sites" (City of Toronto 1991, p.3). Scott Burtons' 1992 commission for the atrium at BCE Place and Michael Snow's *The Audience*, sited outside the Skydome, are two recent high profile examples of this art in public places formula in action in downtown Toronto (Hume 1990, p.M13) (9). A number of contemporary Canadian projects have also directly engaged with notions of functionality and site specificity as well as with a range of social and ecological issues: from violence against women and environmental conservation (Kapelos 1994) to an

increasing recognition and pictorial commemoration of the contributions made to Canadian history by women, indigenous peoples, and members of various ethno-cultural communities. Although most public art policy documents recommend the adoption of structures and mechanisms which would open up the entire process to greater public involvement, in practice, much of this 'official' public art in Canada (as in the United States) remains a relatively closed discipline, limited to the often problematic participation of and collaboration between artists, consultants, developers, planners, and architects.

Not surprisingly, the Canadian experience with public art has also been framed by incidents of controversy and public outcry, often over the formal attributes of commissioned works. Public backlash over Marcien Lemay's memorial to Louis Riel in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Henry Jackman's *Airmen's Memorial* in Toronto (derisively referred to as *Gumby Goes to Heaven* after its installation) in the late 1980s reinforced the difficulty, in any urban context, of negotiating between public expectations and artistic vision. As a result of these tensions, alternatives to the art in public places model in Canada, have worked to question the role of the community in the production of artistic meaning in the urban landscape. Public Access, an artist collective based in Toronto, has undertaken a number of recent "critical-affirmative action(s) on everyday life and its institutions" (Wodiczko 1987, p.45) that address the passive audience of city dwellers through temporary installations in a number of venues, including venerable Union Station. Similarly, the Vancouver Association for Noncommercial Culture is committed to the use of interventionist strategies in the creation of site-specific art in non-traditional places. Since 1986, this group of alternative public artists has created a number of projects

intended “to reclaim a portion of the public sphere for commentary from its constituents” (Larson 1994, p.9). Their most recent temporary intervention, entitled *benchmarks* (1993/1994), offered thought-provoking social commentary through the use of advertising space on bus benches in the downtown core of Vancouver (10). This genre of work, which recognizes and plays with the tensions between art and public space, also includes the *Regina Billboard Project* in Regina, Saskatchewan (Noble 1990, p.47) and the collaborative murals of UVAC (Urban Visual Arts Club) in Calgary, Alberta (Tousley 1993, p.C3).

Due to the fact that contemporary public art in Canada has not yet been treated to any rigorous or comprehensive examination, a discussion of artistic practice in the public places of Canadian cities must rely, at least in part, on the theoretical approaches that continue to be developed by American artists, administrators, and academics. Despite the differences that exist, the priorities of art in public places programs have shifted over time in both countries, and continue to be influenced by the practices of a growing number of community artists who defy compartmentalization, and who ask difficult and challenging questions about the nature of public art in today’s urban landscape. It is hoped that through an engagement with these discourses in the National Capital Region, this study of art in public places will work towards the formulation of a new language and criteria of analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: IDENTITIES AND LANDSCAPES IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Introduction

Since the time of Queen Victoria's selection of Ottawa as the capital of the Province of Canada in 1857, the National Capital Region has, not surprisingly, undergone a number of transformations. From its earliest days as a "small, grubby, riot-ridden frontier town" (Taylor 1986, p.56) oriented primarily towards the extraction of natural resources (particularly timber products), the nation's capital has evolved into a relatively sophisticated metropolis, with a population now exceeding one million people and an urban form which reflects the historic influence of a variety of often conflicting urban planning and design philosophies. The contemporary urban landscape of the National Capital Region bears physical witness to the legacy of these different approaches, and as such it symbolizes an enduring struggle to reconcile the plurality of positions that Ottawa has come to occupy. From its ceremonial and administrative role as Canada's capital to its cultural and commercial function as a regional centre to its economic position as a centre for international tourism and information technology industries, Ottawa-Hull has come to represent many things to many people.

The central purpose of this chapter is to work towards an understanding of the potentially schizophrenic relationship between these multiple roles (or 'personalities') and the contemporary nature of the built environment within the National Capital Region. A critical examination of the socio-spatial ramifications of Ottawa's role as national capital and an exploration of Ottawa's role at the local level will be undertaken in order to

provide an operational framework for the case studies which are to follow. In addition, a discussion of how these differing imperatives and political agendas for Ottawa-Hull have been and continue to be reflected in the urban landscape (including public art projects, open space designs, and recent significant architectural interventions) will be undertaken in order to provide a discursive framework for a further discussion of the linkages between urban form-giving and participatory planning at the intersection of national, provincial, municipal, and local community interests.

Ottawa as National Capital

Many of the visions that have recently been entertained by the Federal Government for the National Capital Region have revolved around a concerted effort to represent Canada to Canadians - in part through the deployment of the urban landscape of Ottawa as a staging site for a variety of national metaphors. As a result, the choices that have been made for the kinds of meanings that are to be conveyed are laden with certain hegemonic values mediated symbolically through public open spaces. They are also propagated through promotional literature produced by the National Capital Commission and other government agencies, addressed to tourists and visitors as well as local residents. Tracing efforts made since the Second World War to shape the capital's urban form at the federal level (particularly its public places and spaces), highlighting how this prescribed role continues to affect how Ottawa is perceived by tourists and visitors, and offering a critique of this ceremonial construction of capital cities, will serve to provide an

appropriate theoretical position from which to view the individual elements of the fragmented urban landscape.

The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed a marked transformation of the National Capital which has irrevocably altered the built environment of the region. In addition to explosive increases in population (through migration) and territory (through annexation) after World War II, the city of Ottawa and its environs also began to reflect the heightened economic presence of the federal government and a vastly expanded civil service - new office buildings and homes were constructed, and amenities and amusements were provided to accommodate the needs of a burgeoning "liberal-professional, relatively secure, and well-paid middle-class" (Taylor 1986, p.171). Although there had been several attempts made to draft a comprehensive plan for the national capital prior to 1945 (including the Todd Plan, the Holt Plan, and the Cauchon Plan), the pressing need for infrastructure improvements, the availability of financial resources, and the vision of then Prime Minister Mackenzie King precipitated the development and adoption of the Greber Plan in 1950. Jacques Greber, a French architect, in conjunction with the Federal District Commission's National Capital Planning Committee, produced this Master Plan for the National Capital Region which proposed (among other things) an expansion of the park and parkway network, the protection of the greenbelt, and the relocation of rail lines and industry away from the Capital's core in an effort to "weave rural and natural values, and 'living close to nature', into the patina of urban life in the Capital" (Scott and Seasons 1991, p.173). Greber's vision was also concerned with the development and

beautification of a symbolic Capital: as a remembrance of Canada's history and of Canada's involvement in two world wars (NCC 1988C, p.1).

Although many elements of this plan would be implemented by the mid-1960s, with admittedly mixed results (as will be seen later), the locus of federal patronage and planning efforts soon shifted to a reconsideration and redefinition of the urban core of Ottawa-Hull in the 1970s and early 1980s. Instead of placing a focus on the development of the central area, the National Capital Commission (or NCC), the crown corporation which replaced the Federal District Commission in 1958, made a commitment in 1969 to further clarify the role and identity of the Nation's Capital. This redefinition involved, above all else, a more explicit recognition of the two official languages and the cultural values common to all Canadians - in an effort to recognize the presence of Quebec and to foster the creation of a city that more accurately reflected the bilingual nature of Canada (NCC 1988C, p.1). This kind of sentiment appears to have guided a number of subsequent projects, from the location of large complexes of federal office buildings at Place du Portage (and later at Terrasses de la Chaudière) in the early 1970s to the eventual construction of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (completed in 1988) on the east banks of the Ottawa River in Hull. The adoption of Confederation Boulevard in the mid-1980s as a ceremonial route linking a number of prominent national institutions and symbols, and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, stemmed from the "National Core Area Concept" of 1971. The Confederation Boulevard initiative was undertaken to physically connect the cities of Ottawa and Hull, as well as to provide for a more thematically unified and well-defined National Capital Region (NCC 1984, p.46).

During the 1960s and 1970s, Ottawa, Hull, and other adjacent municipalities finally began to assert their individual autonomy in the face of over-arching (and largely politically motivated) NCC planning and development decisions which did not always appear to be in the best interests of local residents. The somewhat belated adoption of a comprehensive plan by the City of Ottawa (in the 1960s), the establishment of an additional tier of local governance by the provinces of Quebec and Ontario (in 1968 and 1969 respectively), and the growth of distinct suburban communities beyond the limits of the greenbelt all served to undermine the capacity of the National Capital Commission to act unilaterally. This articulation of a measure of local autonomy in decision-making was compounded by the politics of the largely middle class "neighborhood planning experience" of the 1970s which initiated a questioning of much of the received wisdom about how the city of Ottawa ought to be developed, and whose interests should be represented in the decision-making process (Andrew 1983, p.151). This maturation of the structures and institutions of local government, instead of substantially diminishing the importance of the National Capital Commission, appears to have allowed the federal government to redirect its attention towards more specific interventions and programs in an era increasingly characterized by fiscal pressures and economic restraint.

In the contemporary context, the activities of the National Capital Commission have remained centred primarily on the planning and management of federally-owned lands throughout the National Capital, including numerous parkways, most of the land bordering the Ottawa River and the Rideau River and Canal, and a plethora of government buildings and offices. The current mandate of the NCC, which has undergone substantial

revision since the mid-1980s, appears to reflect a renewed emphasis on the importance of using the Capital to communicate Canada to Canadians - by creating a 'meeting place' where "Canadians can learn more about each other and view their natural symbols" (Scott and Seasons 1991, p.174). In part, this strategy involves a renewed interest in the ecological and aesthetic value of the natural landscapes of the National Capital Region, particularly those expanses surrounding the Ottawa River and in Gatineau Park. The Ottawa River, in particular, now serves as a thematic metaphor - physically unifying the distinct parts of the Capital and the cultures of Canada. The NCC also suggests that by its constant motion this body of water also "symbolizes the continued evolution of the nation" (Scott and Seasons 1991, p.175).

Perhaps the central concern of this re-orientation plan has been a struggle to determine the 'essential functions' of the National Capital rather than to continue haphazardly developing various elements of its built form. Although these developments have contributed positively to the Capital's esthetic nature and provide a high quality of life for local residents, they have failed to "fascinate and captivate Canadians" and have "prevented the National Capital Region from realizing its full potential as the symbolic focal point of all Canadians" (NCC 1988C, p.2). A two-year study commissioned for the NCC by the Gamma Institute in the late 1980s revealed that the majority of Canadians polled were indifferent to what Ottawa-Hull had to offer, with no strong feelings of either admiration or dislike being expressed (Valaskakis 1990, p.225). Canadians were clearly unimpressed with efforts that had been made to make the capital more relevant to larger numbers of people. As a result of these and other findings, a pervasive emphasis on the

national functions of Ottawa-Hull has now been articulated by the National Capital Commission, as the primary vehicle for the provision of an "opportunity to transform the Capital and present it as a national symbol" (NCC 1988C, p.3).

This (re)creation of a potent national symbol revolves around three central functions that are to be carried out within the National Capital Region. In addition to the often repeated mantra of communicating Canada to Canadians (by making the Capital more representative of the country as a whole), these roles include serving as Canada's meeting place and safeguarding and preserving national treasures "which are unique in their influence on all Canadians" (NCC 1988C, p.4). The substantive elements of these new strategies are wide-ranging and include everything from improving physical access to the Nation's Capital and imbuing the urban design of Ottawa-Hull with qualities conducive to communication and interaction, to the empowering of Canadians to discover the political and administrative life of Canada and the place of Canada in the global or international community. Clearly this new mandate places a top priority on the expansion of themes which reflect important attributes of Canada's multiple identities within the Capital. For the National Capital Commission, the animation (in particular the organization, sponsorship, and promotion) of these various motifs is a matter of critical importance - in order to meet the challenge of creating "resonant, multi-faceted experiences" (NCC 1989 p.3) that are packaged in a manner that meets the needs of all users (ie.both visitors to and residents of the Capital).

It is this increased emphasis on communication, inclusivity, and experience that currently guides the implementation of the various public projects, programs and policies of the NCC. Many of the objectives stemming from the reorientation plan are geared towards meeting the perceived desires of Canadians writ large, and as such they require more directed consideration and illumination. Despite the diverse array of public agencies who continue to assume responsibility for aspects of the planning and development of cultural resources in the National Capital (including the Ottawa Tourism and Convention Authority), it is the politically motivated and federally-funded work of the NCC that continues to occupy a position of unparalleled prominence in the construction of images and the dissemination of information regarding the National Capital Region. A brief study of the content of this promotional and largely celebratory literature produced by the NCC will therefore be quite useful in order to frame a critique of the form and function of capital cities, as well as to illuminate some of the discrepancies between the national or 'official' culture associated with the Nation's Capital and the local or 'vernacular' culture of Ottawa and Ottawa-Carleton.

As previously mentioned, much of the work of the NCC is centred on welcoming the visitor (whether tourist, dignitary, or conference attendee) to the region and on providing an overview of what Ottawa-Hull has to offer - in particular how the National Capital Region variously embodies Canadian history, values, and aspirations. At Canada's Capital Information Centre, located adjacent to the Parliament Buildings, information is freely available from bilingual vacation counsellors on a number of permanent national attractions and seasonal special events which explicitly address elements of the

Commission's mandate, embodied in the omnipresent slogan: "Canada's Capital: Ours In Common". After visiting the Information Centre, blue and white signs displaying stylized pictorial symbols and pictograms denoting individual sites direct motorists and bus tours to places deemed to be of national significance which are located within the National Capital Region.

Occupying a position of symbolic centrality among these attractions is, of course, Parliament Hill - "the centre stage of Canadian democracy" where guided tours include visits to the House of Commons (where one can watch "democracy in action!"), the Senate, and the Hall of Honour, as well as the outdoor viewing of a daily 'Changing the Guard' ceremony in the summer months (NCC 1995C). From the Parliamentary Precinct, the afore-mentioned Confederation Boulevard or "Canada's Discovery Route" makes a circuitous journey through the urban landscape that is the heart of the Capital Region, incorporating a variety of national cultural treasures and monuments (11). These include, among numerous other sites and attractions, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, the National Arts Centre, the National War Memorial, the Canadian War Museum, the National Gallery of Canada, the Peacekeeping Monument, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the National Library, and the National Archives. It is along this route that the NCC suggests a larger understanding of Canada's Capital Region can be gleaned - among the collections of art, literature, historical artifacts and scenic parkland and away from the expressly political (and largely negative) connotations of the word 'Ottawa' which exist in the minds of many Canadians. The Canadian Museum of Nature, Gatineau Park, the Central Experimental Farm, and the Mackenzie King Estate are among

other NCC attractions located outside of the confines of Confederation Boulevard that are also highlighted as an integral part of any comprehensive overview of what Canada's Capital Region has to offer.

In addition to these permanent sites of national significance, there are temporary sights and attractions that also reflect various facets of the National Capital Commission's commitment to Canadian history and identity, which are in operation primarily during the peak tourist period (May to September). The topic of these exhibitions varies from year to year and they are often offered in tandem with a number of private and public sector partners. In previous years, these multimedia educational activity centres have addressed such topics as the 125th Anniversary of Canadian Confederation (in 1992) and the Year of the Family (in 1994). In 1995, the theme was related to Canadian contributions to the international community as profiled in 'Canada and the World' - a series of participatory exhibits at Rideau Falls Park along Sussex Drive. Visitors are invited there to discover "how Canadians have made their mark in the world" over the past fifty years, through a number of multimedia displays (including a 'Wall of Fame'), puppet theatre, a ride in a United Nations Peacekeeping Jeep, and an artistic project involving Canada Geese constructed from a variety of recycled materials (12).

The cultural activities of the NCC, at present, also include 'Reflections of Canada: A Symphony of Sound and Light' - a dramatization of Canada's history in lights and music, presented in French and English on Parliament Hill each evening throughout the summer months, as well as a number of popular festivals that are held throughout the year. These include Winterlude in February, the Canadian Tulip Festival in May, Canada Day

(July 1), and Cultures Canada, a 'summer showcase for the performing arts' held in July and August at a variety of outdoor and indoor locations along Confederation Boulevard. This kind of programming is significant particularly because it provides an opportunity for the National Capital Commission to fully utilize prominent features of the urban landscape of Ottawa, Hull and surrounding municipalities in the service of national unity and national identity, as well as to promote as much communication and exchange as possible among Canadians.

The Rideau Canal, the banks of the Ottawa River, the promenades surrounding the Parliament Buildings and along Confederation Boulevard, as well as a number of other public sites, are defined in large part by the proximal presence of this wide array of institutions and carefully orchestrated events - serving as subtle and not so subtle reminders of the extent and impact of the federal government's influence in the shape of the urban landscape that comprises the developed core of the Nation's Capital. This network of powerful "National Interest Symbols" also serves to reinforce the differences between the version of Ottawa-Hull packaged and presented through NCC patronage and intervention, and the larger urban landscape within which these symbols are located and with which they are both intrinsically linked and somewhat disconnected.

Although the value of maintaining the integrity of Canada's national institutions would appear to be self-evident, the persistent and increasingly self-conscious efforts of the National Capital Commission to ceremonially construct a capital city and to make it relevant on both the national and global stages is symptomatic of the difficulties that

capitals often experience in attempts to create and/or inscribe mythological meanings. Contemporary discussions around and comparisons between capital cities are useful in that they articulate the uniqueness of the experiences of national capitals *vis à vis* those of other prominent urban places. An international colloquium held in Ottawa in December 1990, entitled "Capital Cities: How to Ensure their Effective and Harmonious Development" is one of the more notable attempts that has been made to critically assess the factors that have shaped a number of capitals around the world, including the capital of Canada (Taylor et.al 1993). Central to the ideological project of capital cities appears to be a belief that the public face of a capital can be physically altered in order to produce an image that is consistent with historical tradition and nationalism, as well as with prevailing political and cultural aspirations (Sutcliffe 1993, p.195). In this sense, the capital "holds a special place among the cities of a country", reflecting "the soul of a people" and "the expression of its vitality, dynamism and its dreams for the future" (NCC 1984, p.10). It is this focus on national values that would seem to characterize the approach of national government agencies to the design and management of the built form of the capital city, here in Canada as well as abroad.

Space, in the context of a nation's capital, is never vacant or empty - being constantly encoded and recoded with meanings that reflect what is and what is not valued by the state, or more specifically by elite and politically powerful groups (Moore Milroy 1993, p.86). While other cities are packaged and sold largely in order to attract business and investment, capital cities are also marketed in order to promote the abstract ideals of national unity. It is this duality of function that blurs the distinctions between the local,

national, and international forces that neo-Marxist analytical frameworks attribute to the shaping of urban form and function (Sutcliffe 1993, p.196). As Jane Jacobs has articulated, capitals thrive on "transactions of decline", in the sense that the city's source of sustenance is heavily dependent on the flow of monies, goods and services between federal, provincial, and local authorities. The more transfer payments, subsidies, grants and other projects that are being administered, the greater is the amount of work and prosperity visited on the capital city (Jacobs 1984, p.231). Despite the illusions of grandeur and the heavy deployment of rhetoric on the part of the NCC, Ottawa continues to remain a city "on the economic, political, and cultural margins" of Canadian life. Although the National Capital Region may have experienced the positive effects of the various myth-making activities of federal agencies, it has not achieved the position of prominence and prestige which it appears so desperate to attain (Taylor 1986, p.209). The roots of Ottawa's identity crisis stem from an inability to reconcile the difference between this rhetoric of achievement and the nature of the reality which characterizes its contemporary urban form and (dys)function.

Ottawa as Regional and Municipal Centre

Although the National Capital Commission is responsible for the planning, design, and maintenance of a substantial portion (14%) of the land area of the National Capital Region, there are large sections of Ottawa, Hull, and surrounding municipalities that have remained relatively untouched by many of their more recent programming initiatives. In a region comprised of over 1 million people (as of July, 1994), a consideration of this larger

context within which the capital presence is orchestrated and played out will be useful in order to achieve a greater understanding of the relationship between the various agencies responsible for the present form and function of the built environment, as well as the tangible results of their efforts. Due to the comparative nature of this thesis, particular emphasis will be placed upon the more 'vernacular' urban-form giving role played by two distinct political and administrative entities: the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and the City of Ottawa, in order to provide a comparison with the more symbolic or 'official' role played by the NCC (extensively detailed in the first sections of this chapter). Towards this end, a more detailed overview of the recent evolution of urban governance in the National Capital Region at the regional and municipal levels, as well as an identification of factors that characterize the contemporary context will be considered. Also included will be a critical evaluation of individual elements of the urban fabric that have recently attracted a measure of public attention and scrutiny.

Among the most striking changes in the urban landscape of Ottawa-Hull in the post-war period has been the incredible outward expansion and growth, primarily residential and commercial, of developed land beyond the prescribed limits of the NCC's Greenbelt. Explosive increases in population in the post-war period, a heightened demand for low density single-detached housing, and the growth of stable, well-paid jobs in the federal public service all contributed to the development of new communities in Orleans, Kanata, and the South Urban Centre throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Initially, the City of Ottawa concerned itself with the management of this residential growth. However a series of territorial disputes arose between Ottawa proper and these newly

established communities that resulted in the imposition of a regional government in 1969 by the Government of Ontario, after years of prolonged debate and deadlock over how to resolve increasingly complex jurisdictional issues (Taylor 1986, p.199).

As a result, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (R.M.O.C.) was created, incorporating a land area which, primarily due to a lack of co-ordination, was almost but not quite co-determinous with the boundaries of the National Capital Region. The council of this new tier of local government was initially comprised of the entire Ottawa City Council and senior representatives from other municipal councils, with Ottawa having a majority of one member on the thirty-one person council. Since that time, however, the political structure of the R.M.O.C. has changed to reflect the need for greater public accountability and effectiveness. Regional councillors are now directly elected by the public, they are fewer in number, and a majority of councillors now represent the needs and desires of suburban residents. They are also representative of wards that cross the boundaries of some of the smaller municipalities, in order to overcome the parochialism and internecine feuding that has so often characterized regional governments in Ontario and elsewhere (Coutts 1994, p.A9). This continually evolving political entity has come to assume responsibility for such wide-ranging matters as infrastructure, public transit (through a regional transit commission), a variety of social services (including welfare, health, and homes for the elderly), as well as the co-ordination of planning functions among the various municipalities and outlying townships that comprise the R.M.O.C. (Hodge 1991, p.297).

The first Regional Official Plan was adopted in 1974 primarily to designate specific communities outside the limits of the Greenbelt for future growth and to articulate the long term aspirations of cities and townships throughout the region. More recently, the Regional Municipality has taken a more direct role in the co-ordination of planning activities at the supra-municipal level. The new Regional Official Plan, adopted in 1988, designated further urban lands for the accommodation of future growth and encouraged employment and residential uses along the route of expanded and extended public transportation corridors (or Transitways). More recently, this Official Plan has undergone a fairly extensive Review Process, in order to more effectively integrate the social, cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of the region's continued development as well as to better foster a 'sense of community' and 'community identity' (R.M.O.C. 1994E). There have also been calls for the region to better reflect the priorities of rural areas (particularly through the preservation of the natural environment and the encouragement of low-density development) in a more integrated vision for the future of Ottawa-Carleton (R.M.O.C. 1995D, p.2). This ongoing review process recently involved the participation of the National Capital Commission through a joint public consultation process in an effort to develop a common vision for the capital. As a result, an 'Ideas Fair' was held in April 1994 to allow residents of the Capital Region to initiate an exploration of options for their future. This event solicited contributions from children, youth, environmentalists, business leaders, and design professionals, among many others. A number of subsequent exercises, including a series of 'Vision Forums', have continued

to address many of the concerns expressed by both citizens and community groups as part of this ongoing and relatively extensive public consultation process (R.M.O.C. 1995E).

Throughout its existence, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton has continued to struggle with the often dominating presence of Ottawa in municipal matters. Due to its position of geographic centrality and its comparatively large population, the city proper has traditionally exerted a considerable amount of influence over both local and regional municipal affairs. However, at the same time large-scale residential development was occurring in communities located outside the Greenbelt, Ottawa was experiencing an overall decline in population growth. Instead of dealing with issues related to the politics and management of continued growth and development, Ottawa was engaged with a whole array of issues and concerns related to shifting socio-economic realities in the urban core. Similar to other large Canadian metropolitan areas, these included an emphasis on both intensive 'quality of life' issues linked to the 'consumption interests' of (largely) middle class city residents, as well as on a range of 'production interests' promoted by business leaders and economic development advocates (Andrew 1983, p.151).

Many inner city communities became actively involved in a "politics of neighborhood" in the 1970s, mainly through the proliferation of neighborhood-based citizen groups in gentrifying areas of the central city. A number of reform-minded council members spawned by these associations ensured that the concerns of these groups were well represented politically at the municipal level. The preservation of existing residential communities, the expansion of public transportation and social housing, better social services, and the improvement of recreational facilities were all identified as priorities by

supporters of this movement (Andrew 1983, p.151). The interests of private businesses and developers have also played an influential role in the decision-making process and in the recent shaping of the urban landscape of the city of Ottawa. Previously, an increased demand for office space in the downtown core and the easing of restrictions on the height of buildings in the mid-1960s resulted in the construction of a number of large-scale office and commercial developments; from Place de Ville in the 1970s to the Rideau Centre in the early 1980s. At the present time, with government downsizing and increased pressures to attract new business investment and to promote regional economic development and economic diversification, it would appear as though the political priorities of production interests are central to much of the discussion and debate occurring at the municipal government level. Current efforts to merge the City of Ottawa's Department of Planning with the Department of Economic Development reflect this heightened synergy between private enterprise and local government agencies (Barton 1995, p.A15).

As with the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, the approach of the City of Ottawa to urban planning and design has also undergone a relatively recent re-evaluation, in the shadow of jurisdictional overlap and continued friction amongst local, regional, and federal partners. The tenets of the original Official Plan (dating from the late 1950s) have been updated to reflect broader concerns for 'environmentally sustainable urban development' in all policy areas, including environmental management and land use planning (Narwaz 1991, p.55). A focus has also been placed on establishing an explicit urban design framework for Ottawa's physical environment; including consideration of

natural amenities, building to human scale, and recognizing the value of preserving existing streetscapes and open spaces. This kind of approach privileges 'context' in the creation of an 'image of Ottawa' by allowing for a process that would promote a spirit of place while ensuring "that built forms demonstrate a good 'fit' with their surroundings" (Lanktree 1994, p.18). Support for climate responsive urban design initiatives as well as the maintenance and enhancement of the natural landscape and of various federal government landmarks are also identified as critical components of this new effort to heighten the experience of place. Although the City of Ottawa has now explicitly acknowledged its relationship to the activities of its partners (the National Capital Commission and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton) it also appears to be increasingly prepared to assert its individual interests as well as its unheralded position as the critical component of the urban *milieu* that constitutes the National Capital Region.

Fragmented Urban Landscapes

Unlike the activities of the National Capital Commission, which seem to revolve around the management and symbolic creation of the national capital, the City of Ottawa and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton are primarily concerned with the planning, design, and micro-management of a culturally diverse Canadian metropolis at the local and community level. This task is hampered somewhat by the disproportionate influence exerted by prevailing external forces (in the form of the NCC and the unilateral actions of the Federal Government) and by differing internal perceptions of what is to be done and exactly how it is to be accomplished (and who is going to pay for it). The

identity crisis precipitated by these pressures and contradictions is embodied in an urban environment which, on closer inspection, provides further evidence of a measure of fragmentation and a decided lack of coordination.

For historian John Taylor, Ottawa-Hull as a national capital has generally taken actions that are against the needs, interests, and advice of Ottawa the city, while many of the city's policies have shown little consideration for the needs and desires of the nation's capital (Taylor 1986, p.209). Part of the difficulty may be related to the fact that, unlike other federal capitals, Ottawa is continually plagued by bureaucratic and administrative conflict between the interests of local residents and the interests of the nation, ensuring "fragmented, multi-levelled competition between intervening governments" (Andrew 1983, p.141). In the absence of a comprehensive federal capital territory (an option which was rejected in the late 1960s in favour of an additional tier of local government) akin to those which exist in the United States, Australia, and India, relatively unplanned developments and uncoordinated services have continued to be the rule rather than the exception in the National Capital Region (Rowat 1993, p.160). As a result of the multiplicity of municipal and regional divisions, even though the region has completed the demographic transformation from a sleepy small 'c' capital into a metropolis, its urban form lacks any sense of maturity and/or internal cohesion. It is still "made up of undigested pieces, reluctant or unable to co-operate", with communities endeavouring to retain their own identity, autonomy, and interests (Taylor, 1986, p.209). The product of this differentiation is an urban landscape that, despite the brilliance or significance of individual components, remains relatively incoherent and strangely disconnected as a

whole - lacking any strong sense of place (Hough 1990, p.114). This belief was reinforced in a 1994 study, commissioned by the National Capital Commission which, through the use of perceptual maps prepared by residents of the National Capital Region, articulated the need for cooperation and a 'corrective balance' between the dominant physical presence of National Capital Symbols and the near invisibility of any physical connection to local identity in the urban environment (Verriere & Parham Assoc. 1994). The theme of fragmentation may provide a useful context for a consideration of individual elements of the contemporary built environment of the National Capital Region - reading them as the end result of these inter-governmental relations of conflict, contradiction, and (occasionally) cooperation.

Away from the landmarks and monuments of Confederation Boulevard and the federally-dominated central core, parkways, and Greenbelt, Ottawa has garnered a reputation as "a city of views but no places"; replete with natural beauty but largely lacking in distinctive or memorable built forms (Hough 1990, p.114). Spreading outward from the Parliamentary Precinct are the older communities in close proximity to the historic heart of Ottawa (including Lowertown, Centretown, and Sandy Hill). Although several of these communities have completely disappeared, as have all but a few vestiges of the once dominant 19th century saw mill lumber industry along the Ottawa River, some neighborhoods have remained partially intact, retaining the axial street system and portions of the original housing stock dating from the late 1800s. Further out, in rough concentric zones radiating from the downtown core and the Parliamentary Precinct, lie the streetcar

suburbs of the early twentieth century and the sprawling low-density suburbs of the post-war era both within and well beyond the Greenbelt.

One of the original intentions of the Greenbelt (under the Greber Plan) was to contain urban sprawl by encouraging the intensification of development, and by allowing for the cost-effective delivery of municipal services. However the post-1945 population growth of the National Capital Region had, by the 1970s, outpaced the ability of the municipalities inside of the Greenbelt to accommodate newcomers, doubling in less than thirty years (R.M.O.C. 1993B). The establishment of new urban communities to the East, South, and West of the Greenbelt addressed the need for more residential space generated by a regional growth rate that exceeded those of both Canada and Ontario throughout most of the post-war era (R.M.O.C. 1993B). It was originally hoped that the concentration of population at these three distinct nodes would allow the nascent communities to become more self-sufficient - promoting a distinct urban identity while providing more local employment opportunities and reducing commuting pressures⁽¹³⁾. As in other North American cities, it is this kind of suburban development on the periphery of the traditional core area that has come to dominate the evolution of the urban landscape in the nation's capital. Orleans, Kanata, and other outlying communities are thus emblematic of what urban critic John Sewell disparagingly refers to as an "urban disease" which has affected the Ottawa area much as it has other Canadian and American metropolises. Sewell blames this extensive suburban growth for the expansion of vehicular traffic and large-scale strip mall development, as well as for the discouragement of the growth of 'real' communities and public open spaces and the hastening of the

decline of Ottawa's central city (Sewell 1995, p.A9). Although such imagery may overstate the negative effects of urban sprawl in Ottawa (and other Canadian urban centres) and downplay the realities of accommodating the needs of an increasingly large and demographically diverse population, this kind of outward expansion did exact a heavy price on Ottawa's central core, which the Nation's Capital may have been able to avoid through greater planning control and coordination. Much of this growth has continued to occur unabated in recent years, due at least in part to federal, regional and municipal government policies that have become increasingly more attuned to the promotion of property development and the interests of suburban politicians.

While the previously rural and ex-urban fringes of the National Capital Region are being transformed by these new communities, regional shopping centres, and infrastructure improvements, the older districts of the central area have also undergone substantial changes in recent years. This has been, at least in part, in an effort to compensate for the centrifugal forces that have drawn people inexorably to the suburbs and away from the central areas of the city. A number of initiatives from various levels of government have attempted to direct attention and (more importantly) capital investment towards a downtown core currently faced with the diminished presence of a downsizing federal government, the continuing migration of both jobs and people to outlying communities, and the decline of inner-city neighborhoods (Valpy 1994, p.A2). This task is clearly not an easy one to undertake, and, in the case of Ottawa, is one that has not necessarily been characterized by overwhelming success.

Many of the forces that have directed the evolution of the contemporary landscape of Ottawa's central area can also be traced back to the Greber Plan and other associated NCC initiatives which heightened the presence and involvement of the federal government in the downtown core, to the exclusion of local government agencies. In addition to the relocation of the central railway station and Ottawa City Hall in the early 1960s, these schemes have included, among others, the closing of Sparks Street to pedestrian traffic, the development of the Rideau Centre, the construction of the National Gallery, and the designation of the ceremonial route along Confederation Boulevard. All of these were designed in part to revive a streetscape that had remained moribund - dominated by new self-enclosed office and shopping complexes and by expanded arterial roadways connecting the downtown to outlying communities on both sides of the Ottawa River.

The City of Ottawa has also attempted to address the gradual decline of the neighborhoods of Centretown and Lowertown and the associated loss of retail and commercial trade to the nodes of growth on the periphery. Although several districts (particularly the ethnic enclaves along Somerset Street West) have achieved success and vibrancy without any significant government intervention, planners and politicians continue to work towards sustainable redevelopment strategies for other areas of the downtown core that try and enhance the presence of local history and heritage (York 1991, p.A6).

When considered as a whole, a number of architectural critics and urban theorists have identified the central areas of the Nation's Capital as adding up to significantly less than the sum of their component parts. Between the imposing 'crown' presence of the

Parliament Buildings and the colourful 'town' flavor of the Byward Market heritage district, there appears to be little else to unify the assorted buildings and public open spaces within the downtown core. Sparks Street Mall, renovated most recently in the 1980s and acting ostensibly as a centre-piece and main attraction for a revitalized downtown, has come to be dominated primarily by bank buildings, book stores, and government offices. Its open spaces do not appear to attract any level of sustained public use, outside of a peak period of activity at midday (Kemble 1989, p.141). Confederation Square, occupying a position of spatial centrality within the national capital at the nexus of Wellington and Elgin Streets, has been described as an "achingly open, provocatively inarticulate tablet" focused on an imposing War Memorial (prominently featured on the 1994 Canadian Dollar coin) and possessing a physical character that makes symbolic reference to a "collective Canadian conscience" (Griffiths 1989, p.181) (14). In reality, however, Confederation Square is also characterized by an "amorphous mass of left over semi-urban space" that is "noisy, dangerous and full of confusing traffic for pedestrians" and one that is effectively in use only on July 1 and November 11, for Canada Day and Remembrance Day (Kemble: 1989, p.141). While on the map the Square may occupy a position of symbolic significance, on the ground it offers much more revealing insight into the priority placed on functional public open space in the National Capital Region. Other recent 'public projects' include the ill-fated Rideau Street Bus Mall experience, which will be dealt with in considerable detail in Chapter Four, Cornelia Hahn Oberlander's garden of tundra grasses outside of the National Gallery, and *Festival Plaza* on Laurier Avenue adjacent to Confederation Park and the Regional Building.

For architect Trevor Boddy, overfunded and underconsidered Ottawa has won a national reputation as “a graveyard of discredited urban design concepts” - with mistakes being built later here with little regard for historic precedent. In his indictment of the planning agencies responsible for urban planning and development in the National Capital, he cites a number of examples of projects that have been detrimental to the continued sustainability of the downtown core and the integrity of the existing built environment (Boddy 1989, p.168). Similar laments express concern for the “numbing banality” of public landscape architecture in Ottawa and cite the need for more attention to be paid to the human scale of the spaces that separate and connect buildings. In this way, landscapes can be created which “function both as stimulating places to be and as orienting images within the broader urban form” (Phillips 1992, p.14). At present, this kind of unifying imagery appears to be absent, and in this way the fragmentation which inhabits the political and cultural spaces of the Nation’s Capital extends into the exterior spaces of the public sphere, and into the production of meaning - in the form of aesthetic interventions in the urban landscape.

Public Art in the Nation’s Capital

Framed by these processes of urban change and transition, perhaps one of the most definitive features of the Nation’s Capital is the position of visual art in the public realm, particularly as an integral feature of the landscape of the central areas of the city. Comprised of a number of art in public places initiatives and other less formalized efforts to explore the role of art in both the private and public interest, the broadly defined

discourse of public art in Ottawa is represented by a fairly wide range of permanent installations and temporary projects. In many ways these projects are informed by the same fractious tension of interests and identities that have characterized the broader planning and design strategies for the built environment of the National Capital Region in the past five decades. An overview of the elements of the visual and aesthetic landscape at this time will demonstrate these similarities and serve as a means of contextualizing the more detailed and integrated analysis that is to follow.

At present, there are a number of agencies responsible for commissioning and siting public art, including the National Capital Commission, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and the City of Ottawa. Until comparatively recently, however, the majority of this work was linked quite closely to the activities of the Federal Government, primarily through the Canada Council's Art Bank, the Department of Public Works' now defunct one-per-cent-for-art programme, and the National Capital Commission. Not surprisingly, a significant portion of the earlier work is monumental in form and is oriented towards Parliament Hill and its adjoining ceremonial open spaces. Considered by many to be the "apotheosis of monumental art in Canada" (for better or for worse), the Parliamentary Precinct is now the 'resting place' of a number of rather imposing figurative tributes to departed leaders and statesmen (Drainie 1989, p.46). These include former Prime Ministers, like Sir Wilfrid Laurier, William Lyon Mackenzie King, and Sir John A. Macdonald, as well as several Fathers of Confederation. Many of these works were completed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although others were added later, with the most recent having been installed in 1992.

More contemporary sculptures commissioned and/or acquired by the National Capital Commission are dotted throughout the downtown core. These include works on both sides of the Ottawa River in a variety of media and styles which reflect the influence of a more modern and expansive vocabulary of art and a minimal devotion to explicit historic and/or or social meaning. Some of the more intriguing among these include Pierre Bourgault Legros' *Three forms by the sea* (1984) and John McEwen's *Boat Sight* (1984) at Portageurs Park in Hull, and the abstract and colourful forms of Guido Molinari's *Homage to Samuel Beckett* and Edward Zelenak's *Traffic* (1969) both recently relocated along Sussex Drive adjacent to the National Gallery (15). New Brunswick sculptor John Hooper's popular *Balancing* (1981), comprised of a group of five brightly dressed people standing on a beam near Confederation Square was intended "to reflect the lively and varied activities of its location" with accessibility from the ground enhancing public involvement (NCC 1985, p.41). It was this playful work which graced the cover of Sculpture Walks, a now outdated promotional document produced for tourists and visitors by the Visual Arts Programme of the National Capital Commission in 1985 (16).

In the past decade, the central areas of Ottawa have witnessed an expansion of the terrain of what constitutes public art, and a movement beyond the confines of figurative and abstract sculpture, primarily as the result of the establishment of Art In Public Places Programs at the regional and municipal levels. These percent-for-art policies have served to contribute to the enhancement of the visual landscape of the downtown core (as well as outlying areas) and have responded to calls for greater public involvement in the siting and commissioning of public artworks. Public participation guidelines have come to inform this

process and public support for individual works has varied, depending on the specific characteristics of the project and the consultation process itself. The recently renovated Ottawa City Hall on Sussex Drive and the new Regional Government Headquarters on Laurier Avenue have both incorporated a variety of artistic elements, and the City of Ottawa's recent redevelopment of Rideau Street included innovative public art components related to memory and local history. Recent work has also been sited in OC Transpo Transitway Stations, in vacant lots in Lower Town, and in the new City of Ottawa Municipal Garage (through a unique artist-in-residence program). Unlike the Visual Arts Programme of the National Capital Commission, much of this work has been executed on a smaller scale, is linked to larger capital and infrastructure projects, and is created primarily by artists and artisans from Ottawa and environs.

By contrast, in the last decade, the NCC has been engaged in a number of large-scale projects with a focus on national identity and Canada's international profile, as part of a larger and rather sporadic array of 'Capital' events and programming. These include *The Reconciliation* (1992) - a monument dedicated to Canada's role as international peacekeeper, symbolically featured on the commemorative 1995 Canadian dollar and geographically centred on a landscaped traffic island along Sussex Drive. Opinion on this sculpture remains divided, with critics suggesting that it is altogether "too forceful for the site", blocking the view of other landmarks in the vicinity and possessing a design which is, above all else "artistically safe and conceptually conservative" (Riley 1992, p.C1). Regardless of its merits, *The Reconciliation* is representative of the kinds of expensive,

large-scale projects of national significance which the National Capital Commission is committed to undertaking.

Perhaps what is most distinctive about much of the new work being commissioned in the National Capital Region is the fact that it is much more varied, in form and content, than what has come before, reflecting the influence of a number of artistic and cultural traditions. What this has meant is a moving beyond the confines of figurative monumental sculpture and an abstract expressionist emphasis on form, balance and texture to an often more careful consideration of functionality and site specificity, elements discussed in some detail in Chapter Two. Importantly, commissions by women and 'new' Canadians have also increased, reflecting a broader movement within the 'discipline' of public art in Canada that increasingly privileges a plurality of individual perspectives and group or collective experiences (Lambton 1994, p.12). The openness of the decision-making process to members of the public in Canada's Capital is also much more in evidence today (both in theory and practice) and there appears to exist the possibility of a greater potential for cooperation among the various governmental actors actively involved in transforming the public open spaces of the built environment.

Street Smart, produced by the National Capital Commission in 1995, and intended as an updated and more stylish version of Sculpture Walks, reflects many of these developments as they have occurred over the past ten years. Geared to appeal to the whole family, Street Smart guides the visitor along a "journey of discovery" through some of the Capital's "undiscovered treasures", including works from the collections of a variety of government agencies (NCC 1995). This effort - to link thirty-eight disparate projects -

effectively divides them into five geographically distinct areas of the downtown core (identified by color), rather than by commissioning agency, subject matter, or chronological date. Although it is extremely difficult to link a diverse collection of public art and sculpture spanning over a one hundred year period, Street Smart is unique in its attempt to encourage a heightened awareness and appreciation for contemporary Canadian public art and sculpture in the National Capital Region. Also highlighted in this brochure are Melvin Charney's *Canadian Tribute to Human Rights* (1989), funded entirely by voluntary contributions, and Lea Vivot's *The Secret Bench of Knowledge* (1993), a work placed surreptitiously by the artist in front of the National Library in 1989 and subsequently removed by her in 1990. This work eventually captivated the imagination of the public to the extent that a copy of the original bench, engraved with hand-written messages contributed by writers and residents of the Ottawa area, is now permanently installed where it had been temporarily located. It has subsequently become a popular and vital component of the visual landscape along Wellington Street (Gessler 1994, p.A1) (17).

Similar to the history of *The Secret Bench of Knowledge*, the officially sanctioned art that defines the public spaces and visual landscapes of the National Capital Region is enhanced, challenged, subverted, and problematized by the actions of a variety of other actors who should also be considered. Often operating at the margins of official cultural discourse, the diversity of these voices illustrate the many ways that public art and sculpture can be defined, deified, and deconstructed. A mural, funded by Giant Tiger Stores (a discount retailer), was recently completed in the Byward Market in order to

recognize important events and figures in Franco-Ontarian history. Painted by Pierre Hardy at the original offices of Le Droit - a French language newspaper, the colourful mural was an effort to thank the Franco-Ontarian community for their support of the Giant Tiger retail operation.

In terms of large-scale permanent projects, of particular significance in the downtown core are the artistic elements of the World Exchange Plaza. Completed in 1991, the Plaza consists of a commercial and office complex occupying an entire city block south of Queen Street between O'Connor and Metcalfe. In addition to the architectural embellishments and an expansive rock garden and amphitheatre to the East of the Plaza, there is also *Timespan*, a timepiece in the form of an 800 pound ball which moves along a 190 foot trolley above the penthouse roof. Reflecting light during the day and illuminated at night, *Timespan* has, from the perspective of the World Exchange Plaza's management team, "captured the attention and curiosity of visitors to Canada's Parliament Buildings, downtown office workers, and engineers and architects from around the world". Celebratory literature dealing with *Timespan* is readily available at the Capital Information Centre, and as a component of the World Exchange Plaza, it has been incorporated into the visual landscape of Ottawa. Regardless of its artistic merit, it constitutes an addition to the existing interventions in the public realm and testifies to the continually shifting relationship between culture, business, and aesthetics (18).

The most direct, reactionary, and physical challenge to public art programs in the National Capital Region have come via the activities of CRAP (Committee for the Removal of Art Pollution), a group of individuals who worked to rid the Nation's Capital

of artwork considered to be aesthetically undesirable. In the 1970s and early 1980s, CRAP targetted for removal a number of works that the National Capital Commission had inherited from the Canada Council's Art Bank, citing them as physically offensive and actually forcing their early and unceremonious removal (Drainie 1989, P.47). Chung Hung's *Twelve Points in a Classical Balance* is one example of an artwork which was removed (from the Commissioner's Garden at Dow's Lake) as a result of intense dislike and an accompanying public outcry (Phillips 1992) (19). Taking it one step further, at one point vandals actually pushed one of these sculptures into the Ottawa River, questioning the integrity of an artist's creation and the legality of certain types of extreme public opposition to a work that has been deemed not desirable (Drainie 1989, p.47).

More recently, the capital's artists have chosen more constructive ways to engage with the full complexity of the urban reality that is contained within the National Capital Region. "Driving The Ceremonial Landscape", a two part multi-disciplinary exhibition held at Gallery 101 in Ottawa in February and March of 1995 explored what the national capital means as a space, as a place, and as a symbol. Of particular relevance was how the experience of place can often be affected by images, memories, and associations and the myriad of ways that these can be interpreted and manipulated. Importantly, the exhibitions involved a number of means to encourage critical engagement and dialogue between artists and audiences. The work of performance artist Patricia Homonylo, in the guise of "Patti Darnell" involved a site specific tour and pointed critique of the dominant tourist experience of Ottawa, and her accompanying souvenir "Colour and Activity Book" shows Patti picking tulips, questioning the social role of art, and buying pumpkins in the Byward

Market (Homonylo 1995) (20). Additionally, the work of Simon Levin and Andrew Hunter, in the form of *Out and About*, involved the questioning and documentation of the perceived and 'touristic' identities of Ottawa (Finken 1995A). Three tours (by foot, skates, and car) were created, and audience members were supplied with a knapsack containing instructions, snacks, and a disposable camera with which to take picture postcards of what they considered to be significant landmarks. The results of these 'excursions' were later placed on view in the gallery space, acknowledging the vast differences in how people experience places. The ongoing work of the Sight/Site/Cite artist' collective, who also participated in the Gallery 101 show, continue this project of questioning and reinterpreting the location of 'place' in the context of the national capital through a number of innovative and interdisciplinary projects.

When considered as a whole, public art in Ottawa-Hull embodies an interesting and unique combination of mythology, history, and politics, and runs the full gamut, from the officially sanctioned and highly ordered projects of the National Capital Commission to the lower profile yet often more artistically engaged contributions made by municipal agencies as well as by a variety of other individuals and groups. Clearly, it is difficult to encapsulate the full extent of artistic intervention and engagement in the public realm of the National Capital Region. However, what is more crucial for this analysis is to fully consider the relationship between the kinds of art in public places projects produced and promoted by government agencies and the critiques of this process. Many of these challenges are generated in response to the issues which are highlighted and the issues which are omitted in the spaces of an urban landscape with which members of the public

are engaging and interacting on a daily basis. As distinct from other large Canadian metropolises, the visual landscape of the Nation's Capital contains these additional layers of symbolic meaning and intent which any new public art project must ultimately negotiate with.

Conclusion

As a means of introduction to the array of circumstances under which the National Capital Region, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and the City of Ottawa have evolved, both separately and in relation to one another, this chapter serves to 'set the stage' for the more detailed discussion which is to follow. Although the functions of the various agencies inevitably overlap, the planning and programming of each are thematically and functionally quite distinct. The vision of 'Ottawa' as national capital, of 'Ottawa' as regional headquarters, and of 'Ottawa' as a distinctive metropolitan entity, are each a product of shifting subject positions which occupy one relatively contiguous physical location. As a result, it is not surprising that there are some discrepancies between the programs and policies of each administrative tier, and it is through the particular 'lens' of recent art in public places initiatives that these differences can be critically viewed and highlighted. Further engagement with the aesthetic nature of the National Capital's urban landscape will also allow for a determination of the effectiveness of three contemporary and thematically distinct projects as well as an exploration of the potential benefits of innovative consultative and participatory strategies at all levels of urban governance.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PLACE(S) OF PUBLIC ART IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Introduction

The main purpose of focusing on three distinct public art initiatives in the National Capital Region is to explore in some detail the various opportunities that exist for artistic expression in the public realm, as well as to explicitly link a number of issues related to the commissioning and siting of contemporary projects. The National Capital Commission, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and the City of Ottawa all have very distinct policy and programming objectives that are reflected in the work that will be examined here: specifically *Shelter/Tissage*, *TransArt*, and *Shelter...Loss and Replacement*. Each of these projects has also involved a process of recognizing and incorporating the interests and objectives of a number of stakeholders; including artists, politicians, government agencies, the public, and private enterprise.

The analysis for the three case studies will be structured in such a way as to highlight several key themes and points of comparison and contrast. It will encompass a detailed background and history of each agency's public art program, a comprehensive study of the projects themselves, and a critical exploration of the relationship between art, culture, and urban development in the National Capital Region, Ottawa-Carleton, and Ottawa. The evaluation of the outcomes of each of these processes will consider how each work has been received, the participatory nature of each project, as well as linkages to larger ideological and practical strategies for the built environment that have been carried out elsewhere.

SHELTER / TISSAGE

Conceived as part of an entire programme of commemorative activities marking Canada's 125th Anniversary in 1992, Stephen Brathwaite's *Shelter/Tissage* is one of the National Capital Commission's more recent and significant forays into the realm of permanent public art. Unlike many of the figurative and monumental works presently being managed and maintained by the NCC, *Shelter/Tissage* and the 'Canada House' project within which it was created and fully integrated, represent a distinctly different focus. It is a shift that reflects an increased emphasis on public accountability, corporate and community partnerships, and fiscal restraint. This study will involve a brief consideration of the evolution and diminution of the NCC's Visual Arts Programme, through the kind of work that has been commissioned and the role of the various 'communities' that have been involved, as well as a discussion of *Shelter/Tissage* and the Canada 125 project, highlighting the various participatory strategies that were adopted. Finally, an evaluation of the process will be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of this kind of public art design initiative, linking it to other projects and policies within the National Capital Region.

Public Art and the National Capital Commission

In recent years the Visual Arts Programme of the National Capital Commission has remained in a semi-dormant state, primarily due to heightened budgetary constraints and a rationalization of the NCC's cultural activities and programming objectives. Unlike the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and the City of Ottawa, there are no ongoing

funds made available, either through allocation or percent-for-art contribution, for the purposes of providing permanent site-specific enhancements to the visual landscape of the Nation's Capital. Even in more prosperous times, the costs associated with the creation and installation of specific works of art were often assumed through charitable contributions and subscriptions made by private citizens or through rental and loan agreements with the Canada Council and other national cultural institutions.

Of the over forty artistically diverse works currently owned and/or maintained by the NCC, many date from the early days of Confederation. They encompass a range of artistic tastes and styles that are representative of the period in which they were produced and they also reflect varying perceptions of the role of the artist and the role of the National Capital Commission and its predecessors in determining the shape of the visual landscape. The oldest of this work consists of memorials and reverent tributes to political and military figures and are located in close proximity to the ceremonial routes through the Nation's Capital. These include the *Northwest Rebellion Monument* (1888), the *Boer War Memorial* (1902), and the *Polish Home Army Tribute* (1964) in Confederation Park, and the imposing *National War Memorial*, dedicated in 1939, recently renovated, and currently being maintained by Public Works and Government Services Canada as the focal point of Confederation Square. Other prominent early works include a depiction of *Samuel de Champlain* (1915) which overlooks the Ottawa River at Nepean Point, and the *Colonel By Fountain*, constructed in England in 1845 and installed in Confederation Park in 1955.

From the 1960s through to the mid 1980s, the National Capital Commission's Visual Arts Programme became more actively engaged in the installation and display of contemporary work in a variety of media created by artists from across Canada. This effort was enhanced by commissions from the Fine Arts Programme of the Department of Public Works (through the now defunct one-percent for art program for federal buildings), which resulted in (among other projects) the siting of three abstract pieces adjacent to the newly constructed Department of National Defence Building in 1971-1973, including Robert Murray's Cor-Ten steel sculpture *Tundra (for Barnett Newman)* (1973) (21). The initiatives undertaken by the National Capital Commission during this era reflect the directives of official NCC policy following the Commission's creation and the adoption of the National Capital Act in 1958 and include nascent efforts to incorporate representations of 'Canada' in Ottawa. Both the *Garden of the Provinces*, a collection of ornamental fountains adorned by provincial and territorial flags (completed in 1962), and the *Provincial Rock Garden* (1968), a garden located adjacent to the Sparks Street Mall containing rock and mineral specimens unique to different parts of the country, suggest the importance of symbolically recognizing the role of the provinces in the National Capital as early as the 1960s.

With the adoption of the NCC's Core Area Urban Design Plan in 1971 there was a heightened emphasis on balancing the scale and scope of development on both sides of the Ottawa River, which translated into a focus on the development of Hull's downtown core. This commitment also extended into the realm of public art, especially in terms of new landscaping arrangements for Portageurs Park in the early 1980s. The redesign included

distinctive public art components at both the eastern and western extremities of the park, in the form of John McEwen's *Boat Sight* (1984), comprised of the frame of a boat and two canine-like animals in Cor-Ten steel, and Pierre Bourgault Legros' *Three forms by the sea* (1984), three parabolic forms of cast, polished, and painted concrete, invoking the relationship between water, wind, and erosion (22). Intended to complement "an area in which to relax, to picnic, and to contemplate the river and skyline" (NCC 1985, p.86), these two sculptures collectively represent some of the last work produced under the guise of the Visual Arts Programme.

An expansive five-year plan was produced by the Visual Arts Programme in 1983, as the result of a detailed study undertaken to determine sites suitable for the integration of works of art, so that they would be "displayed in surroundings which are most appropriate for their expression and perception" (NCC 1983, p.1). However, although 23 sites were designated within the National Capital Region, by 1985 only one sculpture had been acquired to fulfill this commitment. At that time, after a detailed Task Force on Program Review was undertaken by the federal government, all programs designed to promote the visual arts, including the National Capital Commission, the Canada Council's Art Bank, and Public Works Canada were rationalized - in order to reduce overlap and to encourage greater program efficiency, enhancement, and consolidation (Government of Canada 1985, p.213). The Visual Arts Programme and the Advisory Committee on the Arts were subsequently abandoned in order to channel the NCC's limited financial resources towards more "focused objectives" and to maximize the role of the Canada Council Art Bank as the governments' primary coordinating agency for contemporary art

acquisition and distribution. An agreement between Public Works Canada and the NCC was also struck at that time in order to formalize and more effectively delegate responsibilities for architecture and property management as well as for landscaping, horticulture, and the grounds-maintenance services of existing monuments and sculptures in the National Capital Region (NCC 1987, p.8).

Although the activities of the National Capital Commission in the area of visual arts programming have been completely curtailed since the mid-1980s, there have been several projects undertaken in conjunction with other federal government agencies and with National Capital special events programming. The commissioning and siting of permanent artwork (apart from *Shelter/Tissage*) has been limited to 1992's *The Reconciliation*, a large-scale (\$1.3 million) project originally proposed and initiated by the Department of National Defence and sponsored jointly by the Department of National Defence and the National Capital Commission. Intended as a tribute to the United Nation's role as international peacekeeper and to demonstrate Canada's commitment to world peace, in 1990 a small group of prominent artists, architects, and designers from across Canada were invited to submit proposals for a site along Confederation Boulevard at the intersection of Sussex Drive and St. Patrick's Street. The competition guidelines stressed the Peacekeeping Monument's responsibility "to contribute to the legibility of the spaces and linkages which make up the urban structure, and to the liveability and social viability of an important city place" as well as the need to ensure compatibility with existing NCC policies (NCC/DND 1990, p.9). The proposed monument's Sussex/St. Patrick site was the second of seven 'principal markers' to be developed along

Confederation Boulevard that were identified in a 1988 report as key focal or nodal points of the Nation's Capital, in the European tradition of using markers of monumental height and scale in the service of urban placemaking. As with the National War Memorial at Confederation Square, these future nodes are to be designed in order to provide "emphasis and distinction to places of congregation and confluence, to punctuate a sequence of major streets, or to terminate long vistas" (NCC 1988A).

Eight submissions were received and a Competition Jury comprised of five prominent Canadian architects (including the omnipresent Moshe Safdie), artists, and military officials, selected a concept for the site submitted by sculptor Jack Harman, urban designer Richard Henriquez, and landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander. Their design for *Reconciliation* depicted three Canadian peacekeepers standing at the meeting place of two cement walls symbolizing the resolution of conflict, behind which lay the 'debris' of war (23). The monument also integrated a 'Peace Grove' - a landscaped garden of trees "symbolic of the life and creativity that thrives in peace" (NCC 1993B).

Unveiled in October 1992 by the Governor-General of Canada, the Prime Minister, and representatives of the United Nations, the Peacekeeping Monument has come to occupy an urban space of some significance. In 1995, banners installed along Confederation Boulevard celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations and the 'Canada and the World' exhibit in Rideau Falls Park further enhanced the effort to remind Canadians of the importance of their international contributions. Ceremonies honoring Canadian peacekeepers are also scheduled to take place at the Monument every October. Aesthetically, the reaction to *Reconciliation* has been mixed, with critics likening it to

“something designed by a committee”, an “artistically safe and conceptually conservative” work that is out of scale with its neighbors (Riley 1992, p.C1). The commissioning process itself also evolved with little or no opportunity for public consultation or recognition of the very ‘public’ nature of the site. In many ways it reinforces the distinctly undemocratic elements of many of the federal government’s interventions in the planning and design of the National Capital. As a result, such interventions are largely out of step with contemporary movements towards heightened public consultation and engagement. Regardless of its artistic merits, the Peacekeeping Monument represents the most significant project, at least in financial terms, underwritten by agencies of the Federal Government over the past several decades.

Throughout the existence of the Visual Arts Programme, there were very few avenues of engagement open to members of the general public. Perhaps the most notable exception to this tendency was a 1978 initiative designed to highlight the ‘Sculpture Year of Canada’. Sponsored by York University, Public Works Canada, and the National Capital Commission, three sculptures were commissioned by the NCC and created by artists during the summer in parks in the National Capital where people could come and watch the artists at work. Alex Wyse and Ken Guild’s *Twist 1.5* (in Major’s Hill Park), Yves Trudeau’s *Mur ouvert et ferme* (in Hull), and Andre Mathieu’s *Triangulation* (located along Gatineau Park Driveway) continue to pay testament to this effort to incorporate the public, not as participants in any formal decision-making processes, but rather as observers of the *in situ* creation of works of public art.

For the National Capital Commission, there has historically been little or no attempt made to encourage broader public participation or involvement in the commissioning or design process outside of the Advisory Committee on the Arts, which worked in conjunction with the Visual Arts Programme until its demise. This Committee consisted of a prestigious group of artists and administrators representing cultural institutions both within the National Capital Region and across Canada. They voluntarily advised the NCC on the "commissioning, selecting, renting and siting of works of art" of national stature, providing advice on visual aspects of publications, exhibits, and large-scale public activities of the Commission (NCC 1981, p.39). Unlike most of the more recently evolved municipal Art in Public Places programs, the NCC's Visual Arts Programme is emblematic of an earlier era when sculptures were simply chosen and placed on a site with little or no consultation with members of the public - either because it was not politically expedient or because, according to an NCC spokesperson in 1981, "it would take too long" (Ottawa Citizen 1981, p.3). Perhaps the vehement public opposition generated by works commissioned for the National Capital Commission in the early 1980s, in particular Chung Hung's *Twelve Points in a Classical Balance*, which was unceremoniously relocated, along with two other works, in May, 1982 could have been avoided (Ottawa Citizen 1982, p.3). Similarly, the controversy surrounding other sculptures owned by both the National Capital Commission and several Canada Council works along the Rockcliffe Parkway targetted for removal by CRAP (the aforementioned Committee for the Removal of Artistic Pollution) could possibly have been avoided

through greater education and outreach within the communities adjacent to the federal properties onto which they were unceremoniously 'dropped'.

In the 1990s, the approach of the National Capital Commission to public art has been characterized by more creative, integrated, inexpensive, and temporary approaches that are intrinsically linked to capital events and programming. This sea-change follows a process of extensive program review which followed the dismantling of the Visual Arts Programme in 1986. As a result, a national framework for public consultation, closely related to the development of a Federal Land Use Plan, was adopted "to encourage truly national involvement in building a world class capital". In 1994, this initiative saw the installation of interactive kiosks at the Visitor Centre and on Parliament Hill to obtain public feedback, and a new Public Contact System (PCS) is currently being developed in order to effectively track public reaction to the NCC's events and activities (NCC 1995A, p.20). A distinctive element of this renewed mandate also emphasizes 'cultural animation'. This 'animation' has entailed the devotion of a larger share of available resources to interpretive and interactive programs and cultural events which "provide 'stages' on which Canadians can share with one another the products of their unique histories, environments, and desires for the future" (NCC 1988B, p.17).

In the service of this objective, much of the existing artistic activity in the public realm has translated into temporary initiatives related to specific programs held during the year. Ottawa-based M.A.S.C. (Multicultural Arts For Schools and Communities) was recently involved in the delivery of two of these low-cost participatory projects: "A Capital Family Rendez-vous" for the International Year of the Family (in 1994) and the

'Canada and the World' exhibit in the summer of 1995. A moose and several Canada geese, fabricated from recycled materials, were variously employed as a means to display messages left behind by visitors to the National Capital Region at two distinct sites along Sussex Drive. Similarly, in 1995, a group of artists from Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec proposed and initiated "Canadian Panorama: A View From Here and There", a series of outdoor postcards, in the form of painted murals on the site of the recently demolished Daly Building on the corner of Sussex Drive and Wellington Street. The artists, including Mette Rud Baker and Fran Urman, painted parts of Canada that they appreciated, although they were not necessarily from that region.

The other significant shift in emphasis in the National Capital Commission's updated and severely curtailed approach to the visual arts, is embodied in The National Capital Development Program. Adopted in 1993, the Program is an invitation to Canadians to "breathe life into the buildings and monuments that belong to us and provide a framework of our nationhood". This is to be accomplished expressly through the contribution of projects ranging "from a single tree, a light fixture or a paving stone on Parliament Hill to magnificent gardens or impressive works of art" to be placed along Confederation Boulevard (NCC 1993A). Just about everyone, including large corporations, neighborhood associations, Girl Guide troops, and church groups, are identified as potential donors who could participate in various projects and have their names and/or organizations identified with Canada's national heritage. The Visual Arts component of the National Capital Development Program also suggests a sponsorship, in the range of \$100,000 to \$200,000, to commission new works of art for sites along

Confederation Boulevard that would depict everything from "Canadian heroes, past and present, and representations of Canadian history, to universal statements that express our national identity", to be conveyed "in forms of inherent beauty and strength" (NCC 1993A). This Program, and the attempt to solicit financial support from a variety of Canadian 'partners' is a potent reminder of the erosion of the National Capital Commission's ability to assume financial responsibility for the future form and function of the Capital's urban core.

The National Capital Commission has also recently undergone some fairly significant structural changes and is entering a new phase of its organizational development. Coincidentally, many of the more participatory aspects of NCC programming have evolved during this period of restructuring and re-evaluation, and the gradually diminishing presence of federal largesse. The need to seek and secure new sources of funding and new forms of partnership and sponsorship may have contributed to this heightened concern for participatory practices both within the Capital Region and on a national basis. By exploring in detail some of the most significant outcomes of these strategies in the 1990s (both in terms of the scale and scope of the project as well as its symbolic importance) - 'Canada 125' and *Shelter / Tissage* - it will be possible to assess the value and meaning of this kind of artistic enterprise in comparison with those carried out by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and the City of Ottawa.

Shelter / Tissage

In recent years, the cultural activities of the National Capital Commission have come to incorporate a number of events throughout the calendar year which are designed to bring the capital to life. Ranging from several days to several weeks in duration, none of these are more symbolically significant than the Canada Day celebrations, which are held each July 1 in and around the Nation's Capital. The NCC assumed responsibility for the Canada Day festivities from the Secretary of State in 1978, and since that time the event has gradually increased in profile. It now attracts national television coverage with outdoor concerts featuring popular Canadian recording artists, and has been expanded to a three day package of Canada Day - related events ('Canada Days') since 1988. Building on this historic precedent of involvement, the Commission focused a great deal of attention on the commemoration of Canada's 125th anniversary in 1992, primarily through an extended Canada Day celebration in the capital and (through Canada's 125th Corporation) around the country. The culmination of 'Canada 125' was 125 days of activities and events running from May to September of that year which were centred on 'Canada House'; a 15,000 square foot activity centre located on Elgin Street at the site of the former National Gallery of Canada, in the heart of downtown Ottawa. It was in the context of this commemorative initiative that the *Shelter / Tissage* participatory public art project was completed by an artist with the assistance of visitors from across Canada.

Canada's 125th Anniversary Project received initial programming approval in November 1989, when a three year, \$ 3.3 million budget was allocated by the Executive

Management Committee (EMC) of the NCC. Apart from endeavouring to assure the participation of large numbers of Capital residents and Canadians from across the country in the Anniversary Celebrations, the primary objectives of the Project were oriented towards young people 24 years old and younger who had not yet been born when the country celebrated its centennial in 1967 (NCC 1992). Central to this emphasis on youth was a mandate to increasing public knowledge and awareness of Canadian achievements in a variety of fields and of the Canadian system of representative democracy.

The implementation of these objectives, in partnership with members of the public and private sectors, was initially conceived of by the Project Team as a 'Crossroads' program: a diverse series of youth forums and exchanges solicited and facilitated by the NCC which would ostensibly "reinforce the Capital's position as an essential focus for Canadian discussion and inspiration" (NCC 1992A). Through further internal discussion and with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Marketing and Promotion (ACMAP), it was determined that it would be more effective to create a program focus which would orient the 'Canada 125' resources and activities to one specific location which would become the 'epicentre' tying all of the NCC programming efforts together. As a result, Canada House was designed to be both a welcoming place for visitors and residents of all ages to the Capital in 1992 as well as providing encouragement for visitors (particularly youth) to interact with each other and actively participate in all of the available programming.

There were a number of major components or 'operational outputs' to the pavillion concept developed by members of the Project Team, including several special

activities and seven permanent exhibits which were to be maintained throughout the summer. The emphasis for most of the programming was on interactivity and a 'hands-on' approach to learning designed to appeal to young people and adults alike. Among them were 'Circuit Works', featuring 12 interactive computer software programs culled from various government agencies and private companies, 'On The Move', exploring Canada's achievements in sports, health, and active living, while inviting visitors to test their own strength and endurance, and 'You Be the Jury', an interactive theatre piece where students would become costumed jurors in re-enactments of famous Canadian trials. There was also a nationwide Youth Video Challenge ('My Canada Is') where teenagers were invited to express their conceptions of Canada on video, a National Youth Conference, a 'Mock Parliament', and a 'Confederation Game', where youth, acting as provincial representatives, attempted to negotiate their province's participation in the confederation of Canada. Additional exhibits variously showcased Canada's success in public television broadcasting ('the TV Set'), in inventing new products (in the 'Idea Attic'), and in quilting (through the display of a quilt created by readers of Quilt Canada Magazine). All of the diverse components of this "fantasy-land" of Canadian achievement were mobilized in order to meet the project and programming objectives of the National Capital Commission (Ottawa Citizen 1992, p.F18).

A central component of this 125th Anniversary Project at Canada House was a participatory artistic piece originally entitled "Our People Our Canada". Conceived of as a "legacy" activity, this project, which would take the form of either a sculpture or mural, was intended to serve as a permanent reminder of the people who worked together and

had an opportunity to interact with each other during 'Canada 125' which all Canadians would be able to enjoy (NCC 1991, p.14). Audience involvement in the development of the artwork, the NCC surmised, would also instill in participants the need "to return to the Capital to locate and point out their legacy" in the future (NCC 1992A, p.6). A significant portion of the total envelope of \$340,000 allotted for 'Canada 125' public programming was subsequently devoted to this initiative. Due to the tight time constraints that the NCC's Project Team faced in the preparation of an integrated programming vision for 1992, the commission and selection process was carried out in relative obscurity. Stephen Brathwaite, a longtime resident of Eastern Ontario, was chosen from amongst the submissions by an ad hoc selection jury comprised of National Capital Commission employees and representatives from the Canada Council (Hambridge 1995). The artist had had substantial experience in public art commissions both within the National Capital Region and in other locales.

Brathwaite's artistic concept for a sculpture entitled *Shelter / Tissage* was unique in terms of its relationship to many of the themes embodied in the 125th Anniversary Project proposal. The symbolic work called for a curved aluminum structure (with the materials donated by Alcan) constructed with bars and wire in the stylized form of a 'traditional' aboriginal shelter approximately 3.6 metres high and 5.8 metres wide. Within this skeletal structure were to be imbedded the individual glass face casts and the numerous clay cast and bronzed artifacts of up to 300 of the Canadian visitors to the Canada House pavillion. For Brathwaite, the sculpture itself invoked the origins of Canada, in particular its First Nations peoples, while the faces of contemporary Canadians

from all walks of life would “make the link to the present day and suggest a continuum and evolution” (NCC 1992E). The French word ‘tissage’ makes reference to the craft of weaving, and the process of combining the interwoven threads of the Canadian cultural fabric “which encloses, protects and shelters us” (NCC 1992E).

As one of the focal points of Canada House, the Artist’s Studio was situated on the main floor, in close proximity to the CBC retrospective and several of the interactive technology exhibits. Although the Studio was originally intended to be located next to a series of large plate glass windows facing out onto Elgin Street, in order to “entice” more visitors into the complex, it was eventually placed in the back corner (NCC 1992A) (24). From the time of the opening of Canada House on May 6, until the end of June 1992, Brathwaite, working with two trained artist assistants and numerous volunteers, cast large numbers of face masks with alginate, a plaster-like molding material used in dental procedures. Visitors / participants, in front of curious onlookers, would lie down on the table for 15 minutes while the plaster was applied, dried, and taken off. All of the results of this exercise were retained until a final decision was made by the artist as to the elements which would be incorporated into the sculpture (Dingle 1992, p.24). The Studio, which was publicized along with the NCC’s other special ‘1992’ activities, attracted a fair amount of attention from visitors making their way through the Canada House exhibits. Over 300 people actually volunteered to have their faces cast in the alginate plaster, overcoming nervousness and being careful not to damage the mold by laughing or chatting with onlookers. According to literature produced by the NCC, the moulding process itself was an experience described by the last living member of the

Sekani Rocky Mountain Cree Indian Band as like being taken “to the Valley of Shadows” (NCC 1993E).

From late June until the closing of Canada House in early September, Brathwaite began assembling the structure. The aluminum bars were welded and bound together with aluminum wire and it was determined which of the faces and objects would be best suited for integration into the final piece. The glass casts were then made and mounted on plates of glass which were designed to be suspended amidst the series of interconnecting bars that formed the frame of the ‘shelter’. At this stage in the process visitors also assisted in the physical assembly of the sculpture’s component parts, readying *Shelter / Tissage* for its permanent installation at an as yet (at that time) undetermined site somewhere along the length of Confederation Boulevard (25). After the closing of Canada House on September 7 and a winding down of the 125th Anniversary festivities, a site was chosen at Rideau Falls Park by the National Capital Commission, and the ‘legacy’ was subsequently and permanently installed at that location.

Outcomes and Evaluation

In terms of its participatory elements, *Shelter / Tissage* genuinely blurs the traditional definition of what is meant by public participation, particularly as it relates to a work of art created in a very ‘public’ place and in a very ‘participatory’ manner. Its uniqueness as a project stems from this element of a ‘hands on’ approach to the creative process and the value of human experience, albeit under the guidance of an artist’s pre-determined and pre-approved ‘master theme’ (NCC 1992A). As a result, it is unclear

whether or not this kind of project can deliver the collective 'goods' that a more fully collaborative participatory public art might be expected to. This evaluation will work towards a determination of the successes and shortcomings of *Shelter/Tissage* as well as a brief discussion of the historical precedents which lie behind the construction of monuments to national unity and national identity.

Those visitors who were involved in the project at Canada House were aiding in the construction of a 'legacy' that reflected the particular ideological preoccupations of the National Capital Commission in recent years. As a result, the NCC's documentation of the creation of this artwork is, in many ways, an exercise in hyperbole, particularly in its invocation of images of a fully 'collective' creation. In the promotional and largely celebratory documentation produced by the NCC, post-'Canada 125', the *Shelter / Tissage* legacy takes on a life of its own. The *Shelter/Tissage* informational pamphlet available at the National Capital Information Centre gives an account of over 200,000 visitors to the National Capital Region in 1992 "who worked alongside artist Stephen Brathwaite" (NCC 1993E) (26). This is an excessive number of people, no matter how loosely defined the participatory process was, particularly considering the fact that a total of 280,000 visitors were attracted to Canada House throughout the 125 days of celebration and only 300 people actually had casts of their faces made (NCC 1993D, p.3).

According to 600 youth (part of the 12-24 cohort targetted by the NCC's programming objectives) queried as part of the Evaluation Assessment of the 125th Anniversary Project, the vast majority of the respondents reported that they "observed" the proceedings rather than "contributed" (NCC 1992B, p.25). Three of the visitors

surveyed (all women between the ages of 16 and 19) did have their face moulded while 23% of males between the ages of 20 and 24 reported that they had 'contributed' to the artwork in some way, as opposed to an average of 4.5% among all other groups. Respondents at Canada House were also asked what would happen to the art piece upon its completion. Surprisingly, just under three quarters (73%) of the young people were unable to think of a response. Of those that did, only one percent identified the correct response - that a site would be found on Confederation Boulevard - despite the fact that this information was available both on a videotape played during visitor hours and from the Canada House exhibit staff (NCC 1992B, p.26).

An even more extensive Visitor Information Survey carried out by the National Capital Commission in 1992 also looked at visitor's general responses to the activities of Canada 125, in addition to the NCC's regular roster of visitor services, events and interpretive programs. Among the findings were a 15% increase (over 1991) in the number of visitors who said they felt "a sense of belonging as a Canadian" while visiting the Capital and an increased interest and participation in the Capital Experience among visitors during the summer of 1992 (NCC 1992C, p.53). Fifty percent of all respondents also agreed with the statement that "participating in Canada's 125th celebration made me feel proud" and 61% were satisfied with their visit to the Canada House site, which included the participatory art project as one of its central components (NCC 1992C, p.31). While the NCC cautions against making a causal link between any statistical improvement in public perception and the Capital's 125th activities, it is clear that the survey is suggesting that there is some kind of correlation.

Regardless of these statistical findings, the *Shelter / Tissage* project appears to have been favorably received by those members of the Canadian population, many from outside the National Capital Region, who have been exposed to it since the time of its installation at Rideau Falls Park in 1992. The site, adjacent to the National Capital Commission's new temporary seasonal exhibition space, is proximal to several sites of national significance along Confederation Boulevard and is included on the itineraries of many of the bus tours that circulate through the Nation's Capital (27). Whether or not it is an example of 'good' art (a topic on which opinion could best be described as mixed), Brathwaite offers the visitor a refreshing and contemporary alternative to many of the monumental sites that are featured as part of the Ceremonial Route. In many ways the simple semi-circular shape of the piece and the representational nature of the fifty faces does appear to successfully invoke an element of Canadian unity and identity in a decidedly contemporary style. The sculpture itself, tucked in among a grove of trees, attracts the attention of many visitors who are enticed by the look and feel of the glass face casts, all bearing the name and the place of residence of the contributors. In many ways, *Shelter / Tissage* also contains elements of interactivity; with children attempting to climb onto the aluminum rods while adults touch the textured glass surfaces, looking for people they may recognize (Olympic figure skater Brian Orser is among those faces included) and pausing to take pictures. Importantly, the work is also well signed, with a prominently placed plaque briefly describing the background of its creation and its eventual installation.

Of the three distinct projects considered within this analysis, *Shelter / Tissage* is the only one that has been expressly labelled as 'participatory' public art, and as such the process itself, as well as the terminology that has been adopted by the National Capital Commission, require further clarification. There can be no question that the Canada 125 project was expressly focused on the idea of community involvement, although the concept of 'community' was extended to ensure compatibility with the NCC's commitment to engaging in a dialogue with all visitors as well as all Canadians, in order to enhance their experience of the National Capital. Realistically, it would be impossible to expect that 280,000 visitors, from a diverse array of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds as well as geographical locations, would have been able to have direct and meaningful input in shaping the form and function of a single permanent public sculpture. For the program to be meaningful and dynamic, all the NCC felt that the project had to offer were opportunities "to actually participate in creating something" and "to create something that will live on" (NCC 1992A). The location of the Artist's Studio in a high traffic location in close proximity to a number of other exhibits ensured that most of the people at Canada House would be dividing their limited time there between a number of different activities, of which *Shelter / Tissage* was only one. As a result, the moulding and assembly processes offered a unique and effective alternative means of drawing people's attention towards the creation of a Canada 125 legacy.

Another constraint on this participatory artwork was an inherent lack of site specificity, a concept which has grown to become a significant component of a successful art in public places project in recent years. Although *Shelter / Tissage* was site specific in

the sense that it was created for one of a limited number of potential sites located somewhere along Confederation Boulevard, in many ways the symbolic orientation of its subject matter ensured its detachment from any consideration of its relationship to other elements of the built or natural environment in the central areas of the Nation's Capital. The entire public evolution of the sculpture transpired with a minimal amount of consideration for where the work might eventually be permanently located and how that location would be determined.

1992 also saw the implementation of a number of other permanent and temporary artistic projects that were related, in one way or another, to the 125th anniversary of Canada. Among them was a total of over \$600,000 in public funds spent on a four metre equestrian statue of Queen Elizabeth II. Portrayed on an RCMP steed named 'Centenial' (intentionally misspelled by the RCMP as "a forward-looking gesture" that would avoid any association with 100 years), the commission by B.C. sculptor Jack Harman was unveiled just east of the Centre Block of Parliament Hill on June 30, 1992 on the occasion of the Queen's visit to the Capital for the 125th celebrations (Freeman 1992, p.A1) (28). The commission, which generated some controversy about the excessive cost involved when the details of the project were disclosed just prior to its installation, was the outcome of a 12-member Queen's Statue Committee; comprised of Members of Parliament, Senators, and representatives of the National Capital Commission as well as Public Works Canada. The decision to fund this "big horse and a little lady" was a largely political gesture that harkens back, both in its representational form and in the process

through which it was commissioned, to the turn of the century. Appropriately, the result has been a work that, although physically imposing, has been relegated to a position of relative obscurity alongside the deceased figures from Canada's past that adorn the outdoor areas of the Parliamentary Precinct.

By contrast with this bronzed image of Queen Elizabeth, there were also initiatives during Canada's 125th Anniversary that attempted to offer Canadians an opportunity to articulate their Canadian-ness and to participate in the creation of an art object. Interestingly enough, Stephen Brathwaite's work was only one of two participatory projects presented at Canada House. M.A.S.C. (Multicultural Arts for Schools and Communities) offered young people an opportunity "to take part in the creation of two works of participatory art representing well-known Canadian symbols" (NCC 1992B, p.4). Similar to M.A.S.C.'s subsequent artistic interventions at NCC sites, visitors (particularly children) were invited to choose a piece of material and a greeting to add to the skeletal forms of an oversized beaver and moose. A temporary project located outdoors, the underlying focus of the exhibit was on developing an awareness of Canadian symbols rather than on the conveyance of an explicit '125' message.

There was also another proposed initiative which, although not directly associated with the National Capital Commission, was officially registered as a Canada 125 event. Entitled *Voices of the Community*, it was a high concept 'journalistic sculpture project' by social artist and sculptor Frank Fu-Lun Leung which was designed to "promote multicultural outreach and community participation" (Leung 1992). The work consisted of interactive modular sculptures based on interviews with citizens of the National Capital

Region which centred on their views of socio-environmental issues. The project was designed to take 12 months and consisted of four phases, including planning, conducting interviews, the construction of the sculpture, and its eventual installation at the Ottawa-Carleton Building in November 1992. Frank Fu-Lun Leung intended that *Voices of the Community* would be recycled into new artworks once it had been completed.

Regardless of the intent or desired outcomes of these projects, it is *Shelter / Tissage* that has so far endured as a symbol of 'Canada 125' and 1992 in the Nation's Capital. As a result, the all-inclusive brand of national identity which the *Shelter / Tissage* sculpture speaks to is linked to similar ideological projects in other locales, and broader discourses on geography, monuments, and national identity. Recent studies of the transformation of urban space through monumental architecture and statuary have looked at public monuments as a useful means of conceptualizing the nation-building process. Through this process, citizens have been drawn "into active participation in the national mystique through rites and festivals, myths and symbols which gave concrete expression to the general will" (Johnson 1995 p.53). In the fractured and fragmented Canada of the 1990s, these agents of collective memory and nationality take the form of interactive multimedia displays like Canada House, which highlight Canadian achievements and provide a venue for people to articulate their symbolic attachment to their National Capital. *Shelter / Tissage* thus becomes a quintessential conduit for the 'official' production of national identity.

TRANSART

In contrast to many of the highly publicized projects that have been commissioned by the National Capital Commission and the increasingly community-based initiatives undertaken by the City of Ottawa, the work of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton in the arena of art in public places represents a distinct, low key, and relatively non-participatory excursion into the realm of aesthetic interventions in the public spaces of the Capital Region. Although the R.M.O.C. has been engaged in public art projects sporadically since the inception of two-tier government in 1968, it was not until comparatively recently that a comprehensive art in public spaces policy was adopted. One of the more significant outcomes of this policy has been *TransArt* - an ongoing effort to integrate a variety of artistic elements along the Transitway, Ottawa-Carleton's public transportation network. After tracing the history of the Regional Municipality's Art In Public Spaces Policy and the role of the community in this evolution, this study will fully consider the *TransArt* project. The emphasis will be on the artistic components at a number of stations along the Southeast extension of the Transitway, the most recent of which officially opened to the public in September of 1995. Finally, this examination will evaluate the various outcomes of *TransArt*, and will link the public art commissioned by the Regional Municipality to broader questions which fully consider the importance of the relationship between community involvement and urban design.

Public Art and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton

Prior to the preparation and adoption of a Regional Art in Public Spaces Policy in 1989, the R.M.O.C. had been involved in a number of public art commissions and purchases, largely as part of the Region's Arts Grants Policy. The intention of this policy, and the work of the Advisory Committee on the Arts (established in 1980), was to assist in the development of the arts in Ottawa-Carleton, through a recognition of "the intrinsic value of culture", and the "unique contribution of the arts to the quality of life in Ottawa-Carleton" (RMOC 1990A, p.1). Apart from the sponsorship and funding of a variety of artists as well as arts and culture organizations, this financial commitment translated into several permanent public art projects. These included John Hoopers' *Terry Fox Memorial Sculpture*, a tribute to a modern Canadian hero which was dedicated in 1981 and placed in close proximity to the Rideau Centre (29), work commissioned for the Congress Centre in 1983 (for a total of \$500,000), and a substantial art component devoted for a new regional facility along Richmond Road.

The Arts In Public Spaces Policy adopted by the Regional Council in 1989 was an attempt to inform this process of selecting public art with some measure of consistency and a demonstrable commitment "to the integration of art and the creative input of artists in the development of a quality work and living environment for the public" (RMOC 1990A, p.2). The impetus for this clearer articulation of the role of Regional Government in the funding of arts and culture stemmed from an exhaustive 1988 report, prepared by Ekos Research Associates for the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, which

recommended the preparation of a coordinated regional cultural policy and a regional arts council (Ekos Associates 1988, p.29). This Policy would endeavor to make a distinction between 'local activities' which are the responsibility of area municipalities, and the RMOC's primary concern, which should be arts in 'a regional context' (C.A.O. Newsletter 1994, p.1). Towards the goal of providing a quality, stimulating and inspiring visual environment for the public as well as for regional employees, visitors, and clients, the Art In Public Spaces Policy was adopted as a means of integrating art into Regional Capital Construction Projects (including buildings, structures, and lands). It also provided for the formal exhibition of art works (particularly in the halls and public spaces of the Regional Building) and the fostering of public involvement through a program of information and communication between the artists and the public.

Although the criteria upon which the art is selected have fluctuated from commission to commission, the only restriction placed on those who are invited to submit proposals is that they reside within 150 kilometers of Ottawa-Carleton. No clear definition is given as to what constitutes the production of work which is of 'regional' significance - although the concept was originally linked to the distinction made between professional (or 'regional') and amateur (or 'local') artistic activity (C.A.O. Newsletter 1994, p.1). Funding for public art projects under this approach is based on a more flexible formula than the more standard Percent For Art Programs adopted by other municipalities. Ostensibly, this was done in order to ensure that both permanent and temporary work be placed only in highly visible and practical locations (RMOC 1990A, p.4). As a result, the Art In Public Spaces budget has been determined predominantly through an annual

allocation, with sites selected based on criteria such as accessibility, visibility and site appropriateness (RMOC 1990A, p.4). Additional funds are also provided so that artists can be involved at the conceptual stage of major projects, enabling them to advise architects and designers as to possible means to more effectively integrate the artwork. Since 1993, the amount of the Region's tax-supported Capital Budget allocated for this purpose has been in the range of \$160,000 (RMOC 1993A). This budget also includes a Direct Purchases Program which provides monies for the acquisition of portable works of art by the Regional Municipality. Artists are invited to submit their work for consideration, and following studio visits, final selections for these purchases are made by an independent jury. In 1994, the total funds made available for this program were approximately \$54,000.

The Policy itself is currently managed by an Advisory Committee on the Arts (ACA) with the assistance of various Regional Municipality staff members who are responsible for coordinating the selection process, as well as for maintaining, displaying, and conserving the Region's artworks. This selection process follows a structure similar to those employed by other municipal government agencies. Once the proposed project concept is approved by the Arts Committee and the appropriate Regional staff, an expression of interest is called, and an optional public meeting/information session is held with the architect, R.M.O.C. staff, and interested artists, in order to identify the constraints/limitations of the site and the specific criteria which should be addressed within each artist's proposal. A jury, comprised of a member of the Advisory Committee on the Arts, as well as artists, arts professionals, a community representative (usually in the form

of an elected Regional Councillor), and a member of the Project Management Committee, then convenes. For the RMOC, the presence of a number of different stakeholders on this selection jury ensures “that the audience, artists and client are well represented” (RMOC 1990B, p.1). Before the jury makes a decision, the maquettes of the short-listed artists can be displayed publicly, although this is strictly optional. Once an artist is selected and the requirements of a detailed design submission are confirmed by the Project Manager, the work is then created by the artist, installed, documented, and added to the Regional inventory, along with any recommended long-term maintenance guidelines.

In the past few years, the Art In Public Spaces program has been quite active in commissioning works for art in a variety of ‘regional’ contexts. They range from permanent, site-specific artworks to semi-permanent and temporary pieces intended for both indoor and outdoor locations. The sites reflect the various roles that the Regional Municipality plays in terms of the services that they provide to community residents. Completed in early 1990, the new Ottawa-Carleton Centre or Regional Building on Laurier Avenue incorporated a number of primarily semi-permanent indoor artistic elements at a cost of \$400,000. The purpose of these expenditures was to promote public enjoyment of the site and to showcase the building as a community centre (Ekos Research Associates 1988, p.84). Among the artwork chosen was Jim Thomson’s *On Top of the World*, an intriguing work consisting of three ceramic pedestals atop which sit a dog, a turtle, and a bowl. According to literature produced by the Region, Thomson’s piece “is designed to engage the viewer with philosophical optimism regarding life and general existence” (Ibbitson 1994, p.B1). Whether or not this is the lasting impression of the

viewer, the work does offer colourful embellishment and respite from an otherwise plain grey and white entrance hall. In addition, an array of work in a variety of other artistic media is located throughout the Ottawa-Carleton Centre.

Apart from the extensive network of sites associated with the TransArt project, which will be addressed in detail later, a number of additional R.M.O.C. Art In Public Spaces initiatives should also be mentioned. The renovated Beausoleil Day Care Centre, in Lowertown, features *Suntent* - a dynamic ceiling mural by artist Mark Masters. The piece incorporates a number of brightly colored and irreverent images of children and animals at play. Works have also been commissioned for several newly constructed and renovated homes for the elderly, including Carleton Lodge, located along Highway 16 at Woodroffe Avenue and a controversial \$50,000 artwork proposed for a new senior's home in Vanier (Riley 1995, p.C8). As well, an innovative competition was held in 1994 for a free-standing large scale artwork which could be rotated to a variety of outdoor sites. Awarded to Ottawa-based architecture and design firm Urban Keios Studio, this commission represented the first non-site-specific outdoor artwork awarded by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.

One of the most recent commissions was \$24,500 awarded to a multi-disciplinary team comprised of the architectural firm Griffiths / Rankin / Cook / Griffiths and an Ottawa-area artist, for *Festival Plaza*. Focusing on an open space south of Laurier Avenue, bounded by the Drill Hall, the Provincial Courthouse, and the O-C Centre, the competition, held in 1994, was for the inclusion of artistic elements in the design for a new R.M.O.C. plaza which was intended to remedy the inadequacies of the original 1989

design. This initial effort was centered on a people 'unfriendly' cement and cinder block grid which, although aesthetically interesting, discouraged pedestrian traffic. The proposed re-design of the space offered opportunities for the artist, working with the architect, to "integrate visual art, music, video and/or text into a variety of locations including a water feature, a wooded grove or passive landscaped areas" (RMOC 1994B). The project was also intended to complement Confederation Park (located on the north side of Laurier Avenue) and to reinforce the position of social centrality which the outdoor public spaces of a Regional Government Headquarters should rightfully occupy. This new *Festival Plaza* will be officially opened to the public in the spring of 1996 (30).

As previously mentioned, the R.M.O.C.'s Art In Public Spaces Policy, since its inception, has officially incorporated directives which are intended to foster public involvement and engagement with art, as well as to encourage cooperation between the cultural activities of other levels of government and the private sector in the regional community. The R.M.O.C., as the newest and least physically 'present' among the three agencies being considered in this examination of public art in the National Capital Region, appears to have a limited understanding of the positive benefits of a comprehensive or effective strategy for public participation in the design of artistic elements for the built environment. This may be due, in part, to the fact that many of their commissions are for the interior spaces of public buildings which lack the profile and the potential for generating public response (either negative or positive) that a high traffic outdoor location often generates. Very few of the R.M.O.C.'s recent commissions have been the subject of open discussion or criticism, either within 'official' or regional documentation or in the

print and news media. Available information on most initiatives is scant at best, a situation which differs quite markedly from the documentation of both the National Capital Commission and the City of Ottawa. In an age of massive and ongoing cutbacks to and increasing scrutiny of funding for arts and cultural organizations at all levels of government, perhaps no publicity for art in public spaces is seen by the Regional Municipality as 'good' publicity.

Regardless of its effectiveness, a commitment to public involvement is made explicit within the existing Art In Public Spaces Policy, in order to meet a number of goals and objectives. In accordance with this policy, avenues for involvement come about in four ways. First, in order to incorporate the public in the commissioning of the artwork itself, a member of the public, usually in the form of an elected councillor, is included as a jury representative in the selection process along with artists, arts professionals, and members of the Project Management Committee. All of the other elements of the public participation policy emphasize strategies for better awareness and education, with the public playing the role of passive receptors of information regarding art and artistic practices. To this end, tours of Regionally owned art works are to be conducted for both members of the community and Regional staff and brochures are to be provided to members of the public which describe the various works of art in public places. Finally, artists' talks on their commissioned work, geared towards a general audience, are to be held periodically to encourage "public understanding and appreciation of publicly displayed art" (RMOC 1990A, p.6). Even though these activities have not occurred with any discernable regularity in the past, a discussion of the *TransArt* initiative will provide a

unique and effective means of illuminating this commitment to participatory practice, and will more explicitly articulate the relationship between art, community, and public space at the regional level.

TransArt

The most sustained, integrated, and comprehensive initiative undertaken by the Regional Municipality's Art In Public Spaces program following its inception has been *TransArt*, which resulted in the installation of a variety of permanent and temporary artistic elements throughout the entire regional transportation network. Transit vehicles themselves, the paths of dedicated Transitway routes, as well as Transitway stations have all been employed by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transit Commission since 1987 as sites for artwork designed to become "an open gallery of artworks" to "bring art to thousands of viewers in transit each day" (OC Transpo 1988A). This study will begin with a consideration of OC Transpo and the Transitway system before tracing the history and evolution of the relationship between art and mass transportation in the Nation's Capital. A particular emphasis will be placed on the public art at the newer stations, three of which were officially opened in September 1995 as part of the Transitway's Southeast extension, detailing how the program, one of the first of its kind in Canada, has evolved, and how the public is engaged in this ongoing project of urban form-giving at the regional level.

The Transitway concept first emerged in 1970, after the new Regional Government assumed responsibility for the planning, construction, and operation of a

comprehensive system of complementary major road and public transit facilities (RMOC 1989, p.38). Following a rapid transit appraisal study completed in the early 1970s, Regional Council determined that the most effective means of utilizing existing regional and provincial funds earmarked for public transportation was through the adoption of a radial 'outside in' approach. By concentrating activities in the corridors outside the central core thereby leaving the downtown sections to be constructed at a later date, it was determined that more kilometers of exclusive right-of-way could be built and the influence of transit on the development of the region would theoretically be greater (OC Transpo 1992, p.4). A construction program was subsequently established in 1980 which called for an initial 31 kilometre system to be completed by 1996 - designed to accommodate a population in excess of 625,000. This first phase of development was centered on serving populations to the West and Southwest (from Lincoln Fields Station to Baseline Station) beginning in 1983, followed by an extension East from Downtown to Blair Station, which opened in 1989. The most recent expansion has been Southeast from Hurdman Station to Heron, Walkley, and Greenboro Stations. In addition a Station east of Blair was opened at Orleans in 1994, following the designation of a bus-only lane during peak hours on the Queensway.

The completion of Pleasant Park, Billings Bridge, and South Keys Stations in 1996 will complete the initial 31 kilometre commitment at a total cost of \$ 450 million. Given the continued growth of the Region, a Strategic Plan has been developed to guide the next stages in the expansion of the system. Transitway extensions further beyond the Greenbelt to service the West Urban Centre, South Urban Centre, and East Urban Centre are already

being contemplated, pending the results of several detailed studies and an exhaustive Environmental Impact Assessment. A new Central Area Transitway has also been proposed as part of the Transportation Master Plan, in order to connect the entire Transitway system, to alleviate concerns over congested traffic in the downtown core, and to provide OC Transpo with "a fully grade-separated route network entirely within its own control" (OC Transpo 1990, p.24).

The Transitway system itself is the largest transportation project undertaken in RMOC history, and continues to be the focus of public transit improvements within the National Capital Region. At present there are over 20 Transitway Stations in operation, and they are individually designed to address the specific requirements of each service area. Over 200,000 trips are taken on a daily basis along its routes, with the 833 buses traveling on the Transitway and additional routes carrying an annual ridership of some 78.6 million (OC Transpo 1994A). OC Transpo documents also assert that 60% of all transit rides made in Ottawa-Carleton include a significant component of Transitway service, and 70% of downtown workers commute by transit (OC Transpo 1992).

In a sense, the Transitway is potentially one of the most public and democratic of venues for the display of works of art, exposing large numbers of people to art in a number of non-traditional urban and suburban venues. Since the exhibition space or 'canvas' is already being provided, the artwork can also be integrated into the design of each Transitway Station with a minimal amount of cost and difficulty and a maximal amount of public exposure. For these reasons, a consideration of both the history of the

TransArt program and several of the more recent additions to the Transitway's 'collection' are essential to gaining greater insight into the relatively closed nature of the Art In Public Spaces policy of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.

The relationship between public art and the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transportation Commission extends back almost 10 years, encompassing a number of different initiatives. These range from temporary art installations in Transitway Stations and in OC Transpo buses to site-specific works designed for individual Transitway Stations, including the permanent installations at the Greenboro, Heron, and Walkley Stations - all of which were officially opened in 1995. The concept of integrating artistic elements into the Transitway was first approved by OC Transpo in 1986 as a way of adding "an interesting dimension to transit travel" (OC Transpo 1987). In 1987, An OC Transpo Transitway Art Review Committee, under the leadership of local architect and transit commissioner Pat Murray, launched an "Art In Transit" Program in partnership with the Canada Council's Art Bank in May, 1988. Under the auspices of this program, a total of fifteen outdoor sculptures and large indoor wall works were loaned from the Art Bank and displayed at six Transitway Stations, at a total cost of \$20,000, which was intended to cover transportation, installation and maintenance costs for a one year period. The choices of artwork selected were determined by the Transitway Art Advisory Committee, which included Transit Commissioners, the Regional Chairman, artists, and representatives from the Art Bank itself. Of the artists whose work was displayed, three happened to be from the Ottawa region, including Marlene Creates, Richard Nigro, and Michael Schreier. Promotional literature subsequently produced by OC Transpo inevitably

declared the project a success, as it linked the region from St. Laurent Station to Baseline Station and transformed the Transitway “into a linear art gallery for the enjoyment of thousands of passengers’ (OC Transpo 1988). Some of this work continues to be in place at the older Transitway stations today, including Robert Murray’s *Togiak* (1974) and *Untitled 1980* (1980) by Robert Bowers.

Following the implementation of this initial Transitway Art collaboration, *TransArt 1989: The Bus Project* was launched in September of 1989. A temporary project designed specifically for the advertising panels on OC Transpo buses traveling along the Transitway and other transit routes, nine conceptual artists and photographers from across the Ottawa-Carleton Region were commissioned to create work which would then be displayed on area buses over a one-year period. Coordinated by artist Dennis Tourbin, in conjunction with the TransArt Committee, each artist was paid \$600 for the use and reproduction of the black and white photographic images they had created. The artists chosen for the project included Justin Wonnacott, Evergon, and Kate McGregor. *The Bus Project* was seen by OC Transpo as a cost-effective and innovative means of presenting the work of regional artists and of “taking art to the people of the community” (OC Transpo 1989). In support of this objective, members of the community were invited to the launch of the project on September 21, 1989, which was held in conjunction with Ottawa’s 1989 Festival of the Arts. Images of the art were displayed on a vintage OC Transpo bus at the Arts Court on Daly Avenue, and the public were invited to board the bus to view the various commissions which had been chosen by the TransArt Committee members.

After the official adoption of the Regional Municipality's Art In Public Spaces Policy in 1989, OC Transpo's efforts to reconfigure regional transportation facilities as sites of some cultural significance were reinforced with the adoption of a percent for art program which would apply to all future Transitway Station construction. The *TransArt* program is now managed by a TransArt Committee which is appointed by the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transportation Commission. Members of the TransArt Committee include Regional Councillors, artists, Arts Administrators, and OC Transpo employees. A coordinating role is also played by the Regional Transportation Department, the Advisory Committee on the Arts, and arts staff from the Region. Since 1990, the TransArt budget has been comprised of 1% of the total construction costs of each new station, which have ranged from \$2.1 million to \$8.5 million. This amount is expected to include all expenses incurred by the artist, from the preparation of the maquette to the installation of the completed artwork.

In terms of the actual commissioning, the art for Transitway Stations has followed a selection process which is fairly similar to the one contained within the Regional Municipality's Art In Public Spaces policy, adapted to meet the needs of the client organization (OC Transpo). Once an architect has been selected and the preliminary design is determined to have met all of the functional requirements of OC Transpo, the TransArt Committee and the architect(s) identify sites suitable for the inclusion of artistic elements within the overall design of the Station. At this point a call for expression of interest is announced and artists are invited to submit proposals for a work which integrates with and visually enhances the Station. A meeting is usually held with the

architect at this time to answer any questions artists who are submitting proposals may have regarding site specifications and design requirements. The TransArt Committee then shortlists three proposals for the maquette stage, and those artists meet with the architect to obtain more detailed information on the project. Once these maquettes are submitted, a decision is made by a jury consisting of artists, arts professionals, a community or elected representative, and a member of the TransArt Committee or Project Coordinating Team. Criteria which are considered during this selection process include issues of durability, innovation, and cost-effectiveness. The TransArt Committee will then recommend an artist for the commission who will then make arrangements with the Regional Municipality and complete a final design submission. Artists then create and install the work in coordination with the timetables and deadlines of OC Transpo, the Regional Department of Transportation, and the construction contractors. The Transitway Station is subsequently opened to the public, and in many ways, this official 'opening' constitutes the most significant element of public participation in the entire process.

Not surprisingly, there are practical constraints that govern the scope and scale of the artist's proposals for stations, based on the explicit recognition that the primary form and function of the Transitway remains as an OC Transpo rapid transit facility. Whether the station is oriented towards a pedestrian overpass, is located below grade (under a major arterial road), or incorporates a major local 'bus route interface', it is the uniformity of station design that is of critical importance. All station buildings are expected "to preserve the Transitway design theme and shall be readily identifiable while architecturally enhancing their surroundings" (RMOC 1992A, p.D-1). This predetermined theme extends

to the use of the familiar red logo on all signage, red paint on railings and all exposed steel surfaces, durable exterior landscaping treatments, and a number of basic criteria for all indoor and outdoor elements of the Information Centre - the architectural focal point of each Transitway Station. Considerations for safety also require the provision of an open and highly visible environment on the Station Platforms for both bus drivers and passengers as well as to prevent acts of vandalism from occurring. As a result of these restrictions, the majority of the works that have been commissioned have tended towards highly durable (easily maintained) and highly integrated treatments, often in the form of exterior and interior wall and floor treatments. This is not to say that the *TransArt* work is necessarily boring or fails to engage the viewer, rather that a commission for a Transitway Station poses a whole array of challenges that a less integrated commission in a public park or a comparable site may not encounter.

Abbey, Smyth, and Riverside, located along the Southeast extension and opened to the public in the summer of 1991, were the first set of new Transitway Stations to have commissions which attempted to fully integrate art and architecture under the new *TransArt* policy. They included Tom Sherman's subtly understated *Accelerator / Decelerator* (1991) located at Abbey Station. Sherman's piece consisted of a series of colored glazed concrete blocks set into the sides of the station's 70 foot underpass which were designed to provide "a visual directional context for bus passengers" using principles of perspective and motion (Baele 1991, p.D9). At Smyth station, Blair Sharpe's *River's Invitation* (1991) was an abstract 'idea piece' of polymer epoxy floor coverings painted on the floor of the pedestrian overpass. Further south, Gerald McMaster made effective use

of the walls of the embarkment area and the pedestrian overpass connecting Riverside Station to Riverside Hospital; decorating them with simple asymmetrical outlines of enamel figures and symbols (horses, humans, handprints, crosses, dots, etc.) reminiscent of traditional Cree culture (31). Set apart from these Stations is Juan Geuer's *Carnavalesque* (1994), part of the eastward extension of the Transitway to outlying Place d'Orleans Station in 1994. *Carnavalesque* is unique in its possession of an "element of whimsy" - through the inventive use of whirligigs, mobiles, and functioning parabolic mirrors designed to reflect the sunlight and to adopt various physical features of the station in its design (RMOC 1995C) (32).

Since 1994, three additional public art commissions have come 'on-line', as the Transitway nears the completion of its first 31 kilometres. Among them, Walkley Station, located along the Southeast extension of the Transitway, from Billings Bridge to Hunt Club Road, will be considered in some detail in order to evaluate the contemporary ways and means through which the public are or are not involved in the design of these 'official' spaces inhabited by both public transit and public art. Heron, Greenboro, and Walkley Stations, as all other Transitway stations, involve the use of distinctive artistic techniques and practices which reflect the choices made by the individual artists as to how to most successfully integrate with the site. However Walkley will be considered in greater detail mainly because it is a unique attempt to explore issues related to 'regional' history and identity in new and interesting ways. The subject matter of *A Brief History of Ottawa* will also provide for a more meaningful and direct comparison and contrast with the public

art programs and practices of both the National Capital Commission and the City of Ottawa.

The three newest Southeast Transitway Stations were constructed at approximately the same time, but artistically the commissions present three very distinct ways of approaching each Station's design requirements. Pat Durr's *Linkages* (1994) at Heron Station, was an attempt to bridge the gap between the exterior spaces of the natural environment and the interior spaces of the Transitway's Information Centre. Durr used an (almost too) subtle combination of bronze colored bricks to evoke maple trees, green glazed bricks etched with a 'marsh' motif, in addition to frog designs in the Station's pedestrian tunnel and in the cement around the station - all in an attempt to naturalize an institutional and aseptic space (33). At Greenboro Station, Susan Feindel's *The Mosaic Mural* (1994) created an intricate wall mural / mosaic constructed from colourful Cerabati tiles. Located on the south face of the passenger embarkment area, the work was designed to incorporate the energy of a contemporary landscape and the "earth's regenerative energies" as well as to "delight viewers when seen either at close range or from a distance" (RMO 1995C) (34).

As distinct from these two projects, artist Adrian Gollner and architect Graham Bolton's *A Brief History of Ottawa* (1994) at Walkley Station does not deal in abstract themes or motifs. Rather, the work is more traditional and more accessible, in its challenge to commuters (as the audience) to explore a number of direct and literal references to the historical identity of the Ottawa-Carleton region, through the use of textual, cartographical, and spatial elements. The choice of materials and the siting of the

work also make Gollner and Bolton's piece unique as it endeavours to link the past to the present and to visually portray many of the evolutionary changes in the regional (urban, suburban, and ex-urban) landscape (35).

The \$18,000 Walkley Station commission was awarded in the spring of 1992, with the design requirements calling for the inclusion of art on two sloping embankments underneath the Walkley Bridge, an area identified by the architect and the TransArt Committee. These spaces (approximately 50 feet by 50 feet in area) would "form a focal point for passengers waiting on the platform area and bus riders" and would be visually enhanced using existing construction materials and "integrated artistic elements" (RMOC 1992B). The design would also take into consideration the limitations of the site, in terms of lighting and maintenance. Gollner and Bolton's winning concept called for a series of maps depicting the Ottawa-Carleton region at six different scales and at six different points in its history which were to be located within the aforementioned cement embankments underneath the bridge, with three on each side of the Transitway. These images would be accompanied by related words (in English and French) and numerical dates imprinted on the sidewalk below the maps facing onto the Transitway itself, in order to mark the overall chronological progression of the work.

The first map depicts the region as it would have appeared in the 1600s before any settlement had occurred, dominated by rivers, lakes, and forests. The text: "Outaouacs / Voyageur" refers to the fur trade, carried out between local tribes and European explorers. The two subsequent maps placed underneath the east side of the Walkley Bridge deal with the lumber trade and the location of Philemon Wright's lumber camps,

which determined the form of colonial settlement in the 1800s (accompanied by the words “Lumber / Cultiver”) as well as a large scale illustration of the presence of the strategic Rideau Canal between Kingston and Ottawa in 1826 (“Canal / Defense”).

The three maps on the opposite side of the Transitway also highlight and/or characterize geographic features associated with the evolving landscape of the Ottawa Valley and the National Capital Region at critical junctures in their development. An aerial view of the grid street layout of the town in 1857, the year it became a capital, illustrates Ottawa’s nascent urban form - clustered along the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers and the Rideau Canal - above the caption “City / Capitale”. “Urban / Loisir” refers to the creation of the Ottawa Improvement Commission, the precursor to the National Capital Commission in 1900, and an increasing recognition of the significance of the visual appearance of the capital. The final artistic components of *A Brief History of Ottawa* bring the Transitway rider up to the present day (“Suburban / Transit”), with a map indicating the recent expansion of the Ottawa-Carleton region and the public transportation system, in effect promoting OC Transpo by indicating “the major transit routes that will be operating by 1993” (Gollner and Bolton 1992, p.10).

Outcomes and Evaluation

Originally intended to be rendered as bronze relief or as etched copper plates with the accompanying words and dates cut into the concrete in large Roman-style letters, logistical and financial constraints resulted in the maps eventually being carved onto calcite blocks and then set into the concrete beds of the embankment. This choice of material has

in some ways served to limit the visual 'presence' of *A Brief History of Ottawa*, making it more likely to blend with the beige, grey, and cement palette which predominates the Transitway-scape. The spatial orientation of the artwork also puts the onus on the viewer to explore the various elements of the piece, using their curiosity "to discover all that is there" (Gollner and Bolton 1993, p.2). Even though the final product does represent a visually 'subtle' excursion into the public spaces of the Transitway Station, it does provide a venue for commuters to develop a better understanding of the historical development of Ottawa, Ottawa-Carleton, and the National Capital Region, in ways that parallel work that has been commissioned by both the National Capital Commission and, more explicitly, the City of Ottawa. By exploring historical patterns and processes in an expressly 'regional' geographical context, *A Brief History of Ottawa* manages to articulate both the mandate of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and the distinctive nature of regional identity.

The station and the artwork have only been accessible to the public for a relatively short period of time, as serious delays in the completion of the Southeast extension of the Transitway resulted in the postponement of the opening of Walkley, Greenboro, and Heron Stations from mid-1994 until September of 1995. A 'Grand Opening Day' was held on September 2, 1995, when family, friends, and neighbors were all invited to participate in "a community event, with something for everyone" (OC Transpo 1995) (36). Amidst a fundraiser for the Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, in-line skating demonstrations, and live musical entertainment, the artists who had completed commissions at Heron, Greenboro, and Walkley Stations were on hand to discuss their

work and to answer any and all questions that members of the public might have regarding their work. Serving a role similar to that of a gallery opening or *vernissage*, this day served as the primary vehicle for the development of public awareness of the new acquisitions to the *TransArt* 'collection'. According to the Regional Transportation Department, "everyone was impressed with the design of the Transitway and its landscaping", a sentiment which, presumably, also extended to the public art (Pampalon 1995, p.1). As one of the artists present to respond to questions at that time, Adrian Gollner also felt that a significant number of those people who attended were generally willing to engage in discussions related to the artistic elements of the station design (Gollner 1995).

One of the central goals of the *TransArt* program, according to artist Susan Feindel, who has won commissions for the artistic components at both Greenboro and Pleasant Park Stations, should be to create a direct visual link between the site and the work itself. In this way, the artworks would play a role as "identifying markers" for each Transitway Station throughout the entire network, providing an effective means of combatting the singular nature of OC Transpo's Transitway designs (RMOC 1995C). By establishing an identity and creating a sense of place through a lasting connection between the site and the work of art, the *TransArt* project would assumably achieve a higher public profile. The artwork would therefore be able to avoid a slow descent into invisibility, alongside much of the other peripheral visual 'noise' that characterizes the contemporary urban landscape.

The original 31 kilometres of Transitway have yet to be completed, and it may be altogether too early to pass judgement on the artistic merits of the entire *TransArt* exercise. Some commissions have been more successful than others, while still others would best be considered works in progress. Several more have yet to be opened to the public. A series of simulated bus advertisements, painted for Billings Bridge Station by Mark Marsters, as well as artwork for both South Keys and Pleasant Park Stations, by Ineke Standish and Susan Feindel, respectively, are all scheduled to come online in 1996. A recent competition has also been held for the Transitway Rock Cut, part of a sunken channel through which buses pass along the Western Transitway, extending the *TransArt* concept into the interstitial spaces of the Transitway system (RMOC 1994D). Awarded to Mark Marsters, the final design submission for this \$49,500 commission, funded through the Art In Public Spaces Policy rather than through the percent-for-art allocation adopted for the Transitway Stations, calls for the use of a giant 'hand' motif to enliven the face of the Rock Cut's walls (Riley 1995, p.C8).

Similar to the Regional Municipality's other public art initiatives, it is difficult to gauge the level of public knowledge and acceptance of either the process or the final products of *TransArt*, a symptom of the decided lack of participatory mechanisms that have been employed. What is certain is that the program reflects some of the developments which have come to be closely associated with art in public places initiatives at the municipal level in recent years. Collaboration between architects and artists on the Transitway Stations has become increasingly commonplace, both in order to reduce costs

and to ensure the work that is created is suitable to the site. However this integrative process is sometimes too successful, with the works merging with their environments to the point of being rendered invisible. This emphasis on site specific or site conditioned art becomes particularly salient when an artist attempts to imbue a sense of uniqueness to a space geared towards a particular functional use with limited financial resources. Adrian Gollner's and Graham Bolton's *A Brief History of Ottawa* appears to work towards the achievement of this kind of balance.

The publicly accessible areas of the Transitway Information Centre also provide unique opportunities for artistic collaboration with the community at large which have not yet been fully explored. Apart from the presence of a community member on the *TransArt* Committee, all other components of the public participation policy are either 'optional' or consist of a uni-directional flow of informational and educational programming. Many of these public relations initiatives have also not been implemented with any regularity. Although a preliminary audio-visual presentation on the *TransArt* Program has been prepared which traces the history of the project from the Canada Council's Art Bank through to the most recent commission, it has not been widely disseminated. No additional information on the artwork has yet been made available, apart from permanent identifying signs at the Transitway Stations.

The apparent unwillingness to involve the public may stem from a number of factors, including the relatively 'closed' nature of the Regional Government structure in Ottawa-Carleton, which has only recently been comprised of directly elected representatives. Furthermore, Regional responsibilities have been oriented in large part

towards issues of infrastructure provision and improvement, without the strong sense of community identity which traditionally accompanies civic commitments to arts, recreation, and cultural programming. This is changing, as the recent and ongoing Regional Official Plan Review demonstrates. Within this process, significant attention has been paid to heightened considerations of socio-cultural approaches to planning, including attributes like appropriate design and architecture, the importance of the vernacularity of various spaces, and “aesthetics, harmony and consistency in urban pattern and architectural forms (Verrier & Parham Associates 1994A, p.29). However, given the uncertain fiscal future faced by many arts organizations and public art initiatives, and the ongoing debate over the future of two-tier local government in Ontario, there is no reason to expect any solidification of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton’s commitment to the role of the ‘public’ in public art projects at this time.

Perhaps as part of an effort to achieve the Region’s stated goal of enhancing transit service delivery, well-integrated public art could well serve “to increase the transit-friendliness of public tastes in urban design, and also to ensure public participation in transit planning activities” (Delcan Corp. 1992). At present, however, this participation is primarily oriented towards an annual review of service provision and major route change proposals, in the form of OC Transpo’s ‘Transplan’. Through this consultative exercise, residents of Ottawa-Carleton and users of OC Transpo services (including the Transitway) are invited to submit their ideas and to attend a number of information sessions to determine the shape of the transit system in the short-term future. This information is

solicited in order to allow all stakeholders to review major changes proposed by Planning Staff at the Commission before they are finalized (OC Transpo 1994B, p.2).

As part of this evaluation of the evolving relationship between public art and public transit, it is worthwhile to link *TransArt* to the broader context of similar initiatives which have recently been undertaken elsewhere. Much of this activity stems from a recognition, in the 1980s and 1990s, of the benefits of successfully integrating public art with improvements in public infrastructure, rather than to 'plop' disconnected works into the urban landscape. To this end, municipal authorities across North America have come to involve artists in the design and construction of all kinds of capital construction improvements located throughout the city. Everything from roadways, parks and overpasses to solid waste management facilities and transformer stations have increasingly undergone artistic treatments. Through the adoption of percent-for-art guidelines, these sites, previously ignored in the urban environment, thus have the potential to become new and exceedingly contemporary public monuments (Berman 1991, p.103).

In the realm of public transportation systems, art has endeavoured to provide a sense of place, a source of visual entertainment, and a means of educating and informing commuters and service users. Since the mid-1970s, the Spadina Subway in Toronto, the Metro in Montreal, and a number of urban areas across the United States and Europe have all incorporated art, in both permanent and temporary forms, into the design of mass transportation facilities. Boston, Massachusetts has had an 'Arts on the Line' program since 1977, which has seen the work of a number of artists installed in Boston Area Subway Stations. As part of the implementation program, committees were set up to

develop a "site profile" to study the socio-economic makeup of the community, the area's context, and the architecture of the subway stations itself (Wagenknecht-Harte 1989, p.63). Comprised of area residents, an architect, a transit authority representative, neighborhood business people and representatives from community development agencies, this process illuminated new opportunities for the collaborative process.

More recently, this idea of inter-disciplinary committees functioning in an advisory capacity has influenced the commissioning process of the Art for Rail Transit program of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission, providing artists with historical and cultural information and ensuring sensitivity to the ethnic and sociological makeup of the communities in geographical proximity to the transit station (Clothier 1992, p.15). Much of this work is unique in its use of unconventional materials (including neon and sound sculpture), as is the work recently completed for the Downtown Seattle Transit Project. Completed in 1990, the comprehensive program involved the works of over twenty artists and a poet, and included design elements such as cast-iron grates for the bases of various tree species, tributes to notable citizens, and a steel gate (Rupp 1992, p.25). Seattle has also been the site of a recent and comprehensive survey of temporary projects for non-traditional public spaces. As part of this effort, the Toronto-based artist's collective General Idea implemented their "International AIDS logo" project. Designed to promote public awareness of the disease, an appropriated AIDS image was displayed on the sides of Metro Seattle buses for a five month period in 1991, articulating the true diversity of opportunity for artistic expression and public awareness and education in a mass transit setting (Shamash 1992, p.38) (37).

SHELTER...LOSS AND REPLACEMENT

Originally envisioned as a means of revitalizing Ottawa's downtown core, the large-scale redevelopment of the Rideau Street area, initiated in 1972, has been plagued by a number of difficulties which precipitated the continued decline of the corridor and have not yet been fully resolved. Recent actions by the City of Ottawa have reversed many of the previous design decisions in an attempt to respond to widespread public opposition to the existing design and layout of the site. This redevelopment scheme has incorporated public art as a central element of a new and improved streetscape. Prior to engaging in a detailed discussion of the Rideau Street experience and the artistic components of its redevelopment, it is necessary to explore the public art programs and policies of the City of Ottawa. This background will include a linking of the unique characteristics of what has recently transpired along Rideau Street with other projects that have been implemented by the City of Ottawa's Public Art Program since its inception, highlighting, among other elements, a demonstrated commitment to innovative, collaborative, and participatory practices.

Public Art and the City of Ottawa

Established in 1985, the Public Art Program of the City of Ottawa (known as the Art In Public Places Programme until 1995) has been actively involved in a variety of projects which are "committed to increasing awareness and appreciation of the visual arts in Ottawa" (City of Ottawa 1993A, p.4). The terms of reference for this particular program focus on the development, exhibition, and management of a Corporate Art

Collection, with portable works of art being added by purchase and/or acquisition, and more importantly for the purposes of this examination, a Percent For Art program, whereby permanent works of art are integrated into the design and construction of new public buildings. This is accomplished through the allocation of a small percentage (approximately 1%) of the total budget for capital construction to artistic components. The activities of the Public Art Program also extend to long-term loans of moveable artwork to public facilities, curated exhibitions of works from the Collection at the Karsh-Masson Gallery at City Hall, and the development of a Resource Centre which documents the work of artists from Ottawa and surrounding areas. The criteria for works selected for the art collection are based in part on their adaptability and relevance to a variety of sites, as well as their ability to affirm positive public attitudes toward the visual arts and their promotion of accessibility to and appreciation of the visual arts in Ottawa.

The program is focused primarily on Ottawa's artistic community and the City's visual arts history, promoting civic identity through works of art that are "distinguished from and complementary to the national orientation of the work made available in the City by the Federal and Provincial Governments" (City of Ottawa 1993A, p.4). As part of the City's recently adopted Urban Design policy, public art in Ottawa also plays an integrated role in the provision of "a visually interesting, human scale of development", particularly in the downtown core. Sculptures, murals, fountains, lighting, pedestrian corridors and public plazas are all design elements that are encouraged by this initiative, provided they are integrated into their surroundings and are coherent with the image of designated

'Character Areas' and 'Theme Streets'. They also must contribute to a sense of meaning by communicating delight, and promoting social interaction (City of Ottawa 1995A, p.24).

Since the program was implemented it has experienced heightened budgetary constraints as well as an extensive policy review in 1990-1992 which examined a variety of means of improving the accessibility and effectiveness of the existing Art in Public Places policy. Out of this review came recommendations to improve the Percent for Art policy and process, as increasingly narrow interpretations of the policy since 1985 had financially restricted its implementation and effectiveness. This was achieved partly by expanding the number of publicly-financed capital development projects required to include a percent for art component (by including those with under \$2 million in total construction costs) and by proposing new linkages with the City's Departments of Engineering and Works and Housing and Property. Despite the improvements, these new policies continue to apply only to municipally-financed projects, as Ottawa and most other metropolitan areas in Canada have no mandatory public art requirement for private construction projects.

Other newly adopted procedures include measures to ensure the full implementation of the existing percent for art policy as well as requirements to solicit both early public consultation and awareness, as well as a 'design team' or collaborative approach to art integration in order to "make Percent for Art project implementation more flexible and sensitive to community needs" (City of Ottawa 1993B, p.52). Also stemming from this review and the directives of the Citizen's Task Force on Culture was the establishment of the Public Art Committee of Ottawa (P.A.C.O.) designed to replace the

Visual Arts Advisory Committee (V.A.A.C.) - a volunteer group established in 1986 which was recently disbanded. At present, P.A.C.O. acts in an advisory capacity to Public Art Program staff on matters related to the acquisition, maintenance and exhibition of city-owned artwork in public places and is presently comprised of nine members, including representatives from City Council, the Ottawa School of Art, Carleton University School of Architecture, and the larger Ottawa community.

In terms of public participation policies, the City of Ottawa's program has placed considerable emphasis on the value of public involvement in the process of creating permanent site-specific artworks, primarily through the development of broader education and outreach programs. Many of these initiatives have been implemented following the aforementioned program review and a subsequent consolidation of activities in the early 1990s. In terms of the Percent for Art program, public participation is presently solicited and encouraged in a variety of ways, in order to ensure that the program is "more flexible and sensitive to community needs" (City of Ottawa 1993B, p.52). In terms of the formal commissioning process itself, public consultation begins once the budget for the artistic elements of the development project has been approved by City Council, when members of the Project Team (including municipal staff from the Public Art Program as well as architects and planners) meet with the community to discuss the potential work of art. This project team reports to and works with both a Staff Technical Committee and a Community Working Group, comprised of representatives from local Community Associations and individuals from the wider community. Once submissions and proposals have been received from interested artists, the local Ward Councillor selects a

representative from the community for the selection jury which also includes an artist, a P.A.C.O. member, the project architect and the project manager.

After the finalists have been selected, a public viewing of project maquettes is organized in the community in order to solicit comment before a final decision is made. Once the concept has been approved, the artist prepares additional maquettes, further integrating the concept into the architectural plan, and presents the refined project proposal to the various working committees as well as responding to the community's questions at a public meeting. After taking into consideration the input received from the Project Team, staff/community working committees, and the public, and pending the evaluation and approval of the Public Art Program, the artist proceeds with the fabrication and final installation of the artwork on the site.

Although the above is primarily a description of the specific policies and processes involved in the Percent for Art Program, the avenues of participation open to the community can vary between projects, depending on the nature of the particular public art commission. In addition to the specific roles played by the public as outlined within the City of Ottawa's policy documentation, there are a number of unique ancilliary avenues of engagement open to members of the community, that have also been incorporated into the Public Art Program. Many of these initiatives focus on issues related to education and outreach, and encompass the various elements of the collection. They have included programs which link public art and education through the design and exhibition of student proposals for public places, the use of secondary school facilities and the hiring of students to create public art, the development of an Apprenticeship Programme to assist artists

unfamiliar with the nature of public art commissions, video documentation of projects by community and school groups, the use of community centres as a forum for interaction between the City's collection and the public, the assistance of a group of volunteers in the documentation of projects, the maintenance of a slide library, and the development of further educational programming. The Public Art Program also utilizes the Foyer of the Sussex Pavillion at City Hall as a reception area and an exhibition space for work produced by community groups and local arts organizations.

Considered as an *oeuvre*, the work commissioned by the Public Art Program since its inception has encompassed a full range of artistic styles and sensibilities. Since 1995, the City has acquired 820 portable works of art for the Corporate Collection, and has commissioned approximately thirty-five permanent public art projects sited throughout Ottawa at a variety of locations, including Fire Stations, Community Centres, and Parking Garages. The more recent of these commissions reflect a shift in focus away from imposing stand-alone sculptures towards more integrated, site-specific, and socially-oriented projects which provide increased opportunities for collaboration between the artist, the design team, and members of the public. This approach also encourages the development of community partnerships and corporate sponsorships, reflecting the changing social and economic realities of visual arts programming.

The largest (in budgetary terms) of these permanent projects has been the work commissioned for the New City Hall, when the original 1958 building was re-designed by Moshe Safdie (also the architect of the National Gallery). Completed in 1993 at a cost of \$72 million, a budget of \$450,000 was allocated for eight separate public art projects.

Conflicts between Safdie, the artists, and City officials as to the compatibility of his overall concept with an ostensibly democratic art selection process designed to serve the community highlighted the “bizarre dynamic” that exists between world-class architecture and local politics. Despite the difficulties, the end results of this process variously articulate the potential for achieving a successful relationship between architecture and art (Marcus 1994, p.10). Among them are Russell Yuristy’s *Fin Fun*, a children’s play structure in the shape of a fish crafted from cedar logs, *Vox Populi*, a voice animated light sculpture created by Juan Geuer located at the entrance to City Hall, and Catherine Widgery’s *Objective Memory*, an outdoor sculpture comprised of three separate elements presenting nostalgic images of memory in bronze, stainless steel, and aluminum (38). Public art at the New City Hall also incorporated an educational outreach component, in collaboration with Ottawa-area elementary and secondary schools. After slide presentations and a tour of the finalist’s proposals, students were asked to create their own proposals for the site. “Our Ideas/Nos Idees”, an exhibit held at City Hall in the spring of 1992 featured 300 drawings, models and banners emanating from this particular facet of the overall public art program (MacLean 1992, p.H9). Also as a result of the City Hall project, public art was established as a curriculum obligation for grades 10 and 11 at Canterbury High School for the Arts in Ottawa (Babinska and Zuger 1993, p.37).

Other recent projects of the Public Art Program have encouraged communication with specific audiences and have attempted to expand the definition of ‘public’ art to include work that, whether temporary, permanent, functional, aesthetic, or symbolic, challenges and communicates the relationship between artistic expression and the

contemporary urban environment. The percent for art allocation for the new Municipal Workshop on Swansea Crescent, which opened in September of 1994, included an Artist In Residence Programme in order “to provide an opportunity for an artist to work on-site with the facility workers in the creation of art that reflects the worker’s input” (City of Ottawa 1994, p.6). Artist c.j. fleury worked in a studio at the Workshop for the better part of a year and, in collaboration with 250 managers, tradespeople, and shopworkers, created and constructed a permanent sculpture in chromed and oxidized steel which in many ways conveys a sense of who works there (Finken 1995B, p.18) (39). Although fleury’s project, and the concept of an artist in residence at the Municipal Workshop, was originally met with trepidation and consternation by staff, City Councillors, and members of the public, the process managed to facilitate an exchange of ideas amongst participants and a greater understanding and appreciation of art and the artistic community, as well as the work of skilled tradespeople employed by the City of Ottawa (City of Ottawa 1995, p.6).

“Artists in Wading”, a project successfully initiated in the summer of 1994, saw the adopted use of wading pools in playgrounds throughout the city as giant canvasses for artists to create dynamic and colourful large scale paintings. Usually painted on a yearly basis, the paintings were intended as an alternative to the uniformly light blue colour that coats most City pools. Curated “in order to move work from the studio into the neighborhoods and to establish a precedent for temporary public art in the community”, “Artists in Wading” has also solicited the participation of the City’s Parks Programme and Engineering and Works staff and receives corporate sponsorship, in the form of donations

of Benjamin Moore paint and painting supplies (City of Ottawa 1995B, p.2). The program continues to expand from the three pools originally painted in 1994 by Adrian Gollner, Diane Woodward, and John Marok, and the idea has generated a great deal of interest from other Canadian municipalities, many of whom (including Vancouver and Calgary) have recently adopted similar pool painting programs (Finken 1995C, p.15).

There are several additional projects that expand the notion of public art in meaningful and significant ways which should also be mentioned. Among them are a Community Garden which was planted in the summer of 1995 on an abandoned lot in a deteriorating section of Lowertown directly west of King Edward Avenue. Several artists worked with the Shepherds of Good Hope, a local organization providing charitable relief to the homeless, to create an herb and vegetable garden to be used by the agency. Seeds, plants, and garden implements were all donated by a local greenhouse to reduce expenses, and the project effectively transformed a derelict piece of land into a temporary urban cornucopia that was, for a growing season anyway (that particular parcel of land has now been zoned for redevelopment), a valuable asset to the community (40). An additional ongoing project is *Point of View* - a collaboration between an Ottawa photographer and a group of homeless youth in the Byward Market as a component of the ongoing William Street Redevelopment Project. Thanks to a special allocation from the City's Planning Department of \$4,000 and donations from corporate sponsors, six young people have been documenting various facets of their everyday existence living on the streets of the Nation's Capital (41).

Finally, and in a very different vein from the work previously discussed, the City of Ottawa is co-sponsoring (along with the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada) a national ideas competition entitled "The New Canadian City" which encourages architects, artists, and landscape architects (including students and interns) to collaborate in an exploration of the present and future state of infrastructure in Canadian urban areas. As a result of a City of Ottawa task force on revitalization, the focus of the Ideas Competition is on three specific interchange/underpass sites along the Queensway (Highway 417) which are proximal to the Parliamentary Precinct and the ceremonial routes around the capital, yet have little or no visual connection to the communities through which they pass. Those who intend to submit are being asked to consider "the concept of entry as it applies to the contemporary city" and "the future of hard infrastructure and the impact of new communications and transportation technologies on the relationship between C.B.D. (or Central Business District), urban neighborhood, and suburb" (RAIC/City of Ottawa 1995). Fifty entries will subsequently be selected from among the submissions to form an exhibition of proposals for urban 'gateways' which will travel across Canada in the summer of 1996.

What appears to set the City of Ottawa's Public Art Program apart from other initiatives within the National Capital Region is a level of commitment, both in policy and practice, to the concept of community involvement. This heightened level of engagement, although not always characterized by aesthetic or practical success, recognizes the democratic potential inherent in the public art process. In the contemporary context, the development of partnerships with community organizations at the local level, the

integration of public art with other large-scale (re)developments, and the creative and efficient use of the ever-dwindling financial resources that are available for aesthetic interventions in the urban environment are all critical components of any effective art in public places formula. However, although public art guidelines are now explicitly identified within the urban design section of the Official Plan, it remains difficult to assess whether and how a number of disparate projects restricted almost entirely to sites managed and/or developed by the City of Ottawa impact on the existing visual landscape in meaningful and significant ways. By studying the Rideau Street experience through an analysis of issues related to the history of the site and the design and implementation of the project, a comparison with the programs and projects of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and the National Capital Commission will more fully articulate the various functions of public art in the National Capital Region.

Rideau Street's Redevelopment

Historically, Rideau Street was a major commercial and retail corridor, acting as the primary east-west artery linking the upper and lower towns of Ottawa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and attracting a variety of department stores and a hotel to the area directly east of the canal, adjacent to the central railway station. The relocation of the station, the advent of large shopping centres to serve burgeoning outlying neighborhoods constructed in the post-war period, and the construction of federal office buildings in Centretown all precipitated the decline of commercial activity in this area of

the downtown core, and contributed to a gradual deterioration of the vitality of Rideau Street itself.

The first effort to address the continued decline of Rideau Street occurred in the early 1970s, following a proposal made by the Federal Government in 1972 dealing with the vacant railway lands opposite the Rideau Canal from the National Arts Centre. A Rideau Centre Team, comprised of representatives from the National Capital Commission, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, the City of Ottawa, as well as various business interests, produced an expanded concept in 1975 without any significant public involvement (although a Public Advisory Committee was later created). This initial plan featured a number of elements; including federal office space, a Canadian Pacific Hotel, and a large shopping centre. It also recommended the conversion of Rideau Street into a covered shopping area or *galleria*, a concept originating from the Greber Plan which was replaced by a proposal for glass and steel 'sidewalk enclosures' and a transit mall following a detailed 1979 study (Murray and Murray 1980)). Although there was no consensus as to a preferred design concept for the public open spaces along the street, it was thought that this would be the most cost-effective means of creating visual and physical links between the proposed Rideau Centre and Rideau Street. Local businesses could then compete with suburban shopping centres, avoiding the continual spiral of decline and stimulating revitalization while simultaneously keeping the corridor open for the purposes of public transportation. After the approval of the site plan and design guidelines and the negotiation of a cost-share formula for the street and sidewalk improvements between the City of Ottawa, the Rideau Area B.I.A. (Business

Improvement Area), and the Rideau Mall Authority (R.M.A.), the various elements of the Rideau Area Project were eventually completed in 1983, albeit in a form considerably altered from what had been initially envisioned.

As early as May, 1986, concerns were raised by local businesses and community members as to the continued economic deterioration of Rideau Street in the time since the installation of the bus shelters and the construction of the Rideau Centre. Problems cited included a disruption in local traffic flow created by the transit mall, and a number of negative externalities that area businesses linked to the kinds of people and activities attracted to the enclosures (including an increased presence of street youth, homeless people, loiterers, and panhandlers). The physical nature of the structures themselves were also seen as unattractive and relatively inaccessible (City of Ottawa 1993, p.8). Rideau Street: Taking A Closer Look, a study commissioned by the Ottawa Planning Committee (O.P.C.) and released in 1987 after a series of public consultations, attempted to address many of these concerns. The report presented seven options for consideration, the preferred of which proposed the re-introduction of two-way vehicular traffic on to Rideau Street, the removal of the sidewalk transit enclosures, and a variety of physical improvements linked to a return to a 'mainstreet environment' and the development of 'visual continuity' along the street (Griffiths Rankin Cook / Griffiths 1987, art.11.3).

Once the bitter dispute over the outstanding cost-sharing issues stemming from the installation of the transit mall and the costs associated with their removal were finally resolved in May 1992 between City Council and the primary Rideau Street stakeholders (through a negotiated 50/50 cost sharing settlement) the Rideau Street Redevelopment

Project proceeded apace. An exploration of the transportation impacts of the preferred design option was also undertaken to address the effects of the proposed changes on the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (as the actual paved surfaces of Rideau Street itself are a regional responsibility), OC Transpo, and local cyclist organizations. According to the Environmental Study Report for the Rideau Redevelopment Project, the final product, to be delivered in late 1993, was expected "to contribute positively to the revitalization of Rideau Street while relieving current concerns and maintaining its ability to accommodate the future evolution of Rideau Street" (UMA Engineering Ltd. 1993, p.19). Not surprisingly, this statement of intent was entirely compatible with that articulated in the context of proposals for the first Rideau Area Project in the early 1970s, and implicitly recognized the failure of the previous attempt to attain similar objectives.

This process of so quickly reversing the negative effects of the "urban vasectomy" which the Rideau Bus Mall had come to represent was a first for a large Canadian city (Boddy 1989, p.169). At the time, critics suggested the real tragedy was that Ottawa City Council could have learned from the mistakes of similar projects in other cities (including the difficulties experienced by the Granville Street Bus Mall in Vancouver) and could have avoided the expenses incurred as a direct result of the ill-fated Bus Mall concept (Freeman 1990, p.A7). To avoid a repeat occurrence, and in order to better ensure the success of the Rideau Street Redevelopment Project and compatibility with the City's public participation policies, substantial resources were devoted to ensuring that all stakeholders would be directly involved in the design process. There were three organizational components of the project, including a 'co-venture' Steering Committee (with

representatives from the City of Ottawa, the Rideau Mall Property Owners, and the Rideau Area B.I.A.), the Rideau Street Project Team, and a Public Advisory Group which was intended to function "in the capacity of a community 'sounding board'" and "to provide advice directly to the Committee with respect to the planning, design and implementation of the Rideau Street Project" (UMA Engineering Ltd. 1993, p.7).

Public participation was solicited from a wide range of interest groups, both from within the Rideau Street Project Area, and from across the city. Organizations like the Rideau Centre Merchants Association, local Community Associations, the National Capital Commission, Heritage Ottawa, OC Transpo, Ottawa Disabled Citizens Advisory Committee and Arts Court made submissions to a series of Public Advisory Group Meetings and Public Information Centres held in the Rideau Street Area in late 1992 and early 1993. These discussions were supplemented by a series of Focus Group Meetings which dealt specifically with design issues related to the needs of cyclists and pedestrians, security, safety, and lighting concerns, as well as the arts and culture, and heritage amenities (City of Ottawa 1993E, pp.38-42).

Shelter...Loss and Replacement

As part of the City's Art In Public Places Program, it was determined that a permanent outdoor public art component (from a total allocation of \$50, 000: provided by the City of Ottawa and the Rideau Street B.I.A., as part of the cost-sharing agreement) designed and developed by an Ottawa-area artist would accompany a variety of streetscaping improvements once the enclosures had been dismantled. These

embellishments included new sidewalks, streetlamps, trees, benches, and banners, as well as repairs to existing storefront facades as part of the City's Facade Improvement Programme. The artist would also work closely with the design team in order "to provide comment and direction regarding streetscaping, landscaping, and artistic elements in the overall concept for the site" (City of Ottawa 1993C). Importantly, this signalled the first time in Ottawa's history that an artist had been incorporated so early on in the planning and design process. This example of an integrated work is what makes the Rideau Street Redevelopment Project unique, in all of its various outcomes.

The initial call for proposals was circulated in October, 1992, and from the twenty-one submissions received, artist Justin Wonnacott was awarded the commission by the selection jury. The primary responsibilities of the artist at the concept/design phase of the project encompassed a review of the history of Rideau Street "to understand its context for the current design exercise" in order to "determine the format and preferences for artistic elements/objects in the development of a new image for Rideau Street as an animated, secure people place that is compatible with its heritage". The artist was also expected to participate in the Public Advisory Group meetings "to provide commentary and respond to queries related to public art elements of the design" (City of Ottawa 1993D). This consultative exercise in late 1992 represented, in large part, the extent of formal public participation in the creative process. However, according to Wonnacott, these meetings and the more narrowly defined focus groups did have a fairly significant influence on the design of the various artistic treatments (City of Ottawa 1993C).

The final concept developed and subsequently proposed by Justin Wonnacott in early 1993 was oriented primarily towards an exploration of the history of Rideau Street in the early 1800s, in contrast to the more dubious circumstances of its more recent and (economically and socially) troubled past. The concept called for six different artistic elements specified for a number of sites along Rideau Street from King Edward Avenue to Sussex Drive, thematically unified by a focus “on shelter, its loss and replacement and provisioning for the Canadian climate”, an intent ironically shared with the original Bus Mall configuration (City of Ottawa 1993E, p.16). These included three distinct pieces readily identifiable as artworks and three functional design treatments related primarily to the new streetscape improvements. All of them were oriented towards the pedestrian (‘sidewalk art’) rather than vehicular traffic and emphasized “human scale, wayfinding, comfort levels, and personal safety issues as important themes and incentives for people to be on and use the street” (Corush, Sunderland, Wright Ltd. 1993, p.16).

Of the three proposed artworks, two of them consisted of textual fragments embedded along the sidewalk in concrete pads. The one located at the easternmost site near King Edward Avenue was intended by the artist as a wayfinding device, complete with directional arrow. The text refers to the requirement that early settlers in the area had to erect a building of thirty square feet within one year in order to obtain a clear title to the land allotted to them, and also refers to the vacant land that has recently occupied this part of the Rideau Street corridor. Closer to Sussex Drive, the second piece consisted of a ‘schematic’ campfire constructed of steel replicas of logs affixed to a concrete foundation 3.5 m in diameter. On this site the text refers anecdotally to a frozen

Christmas spent near the Ottawa River in 1826 drinking 'warm grog'. Staff from a number of municipal departments expressed concern over the metal flames and logs that would be protruding from the site, and recommended that supportive and protective elements would be required to prevent damage from private or maintenance vehicles if the design was to be implemented. The key element of the public art component was a work proposed for a site along Rideau adjacent to William Street, consisting of a depiction of a campsite similar to one that may have been occupied 160 years ago. It features a campfire at night, with a group of people setting up camp and preparing a meal. The image was to be placed on a 'lean-to' style structure made of material from removed shelters, situated in a small landscaped space with provisions being made for some seating and a variety of hardy perennials and ornamental grasses (42).

The three functionally integrated artistic treatments were located at crosswalks, bus shelters, and information kiosks along Rideau Street. Unlike the artworks designated and maintained as works of art by the Art in Public Places Programme, as functional streetscape elements it was deemed that these enhancements "should have their future conservation and maintenance requirements resolved and planned well in advance of the design and development phase of any work to be done in future on the street" (Corush, Sunderland, Wright 1993, p.29). For the crossings, Wonnacott created stencilled motifs related to the historical context of the street at each specific location. At the Freiman Mall crossing, directly underneath the imposing shadow of a shopping pedway, these included references to both a boxing ring where local lumbermen traditionally settled disputes and the 'by-wash' - a cholera ridden creek which used to pass through what is now the Rideau

Centre and the Byward Market. Further east, at the Dalhousie crossing, references to animals (in the form of paw prints) and indigenous plant species that once thrived along the Ottawa River suggested the natural heritage of the area. The crosswalk at Waller, located close to the site of the now disappeared Rideau Chapel, proposed a pattern of blue arches and text in English and French as a reminder of the architectural loss the Chapel represents (43).

The design of the bus shelters, which were intended to replace the Bus Mall in terms of providing temporary seating and refuge for pedestrians, involved the participation of the commissioned artist in the choice of colour and text of the fascias upon which the street address of each shelter appears, as well as in the placement of panels of text along the glass sides of the shelters. The content of this text varied between shelters and also made direct reference to the history of the street and of Bytown, through the use of anecdotal material written in the present tense by Justin Wonnacott based on a number of archival sources from the early 1800s. These French and English textual fragments dealt with a diverse array of subject matter, including a particularly beautiful occurrence of the *aurora borealis* in 1837, a notice of a reward for the return of a young dog (answering to the name of 'Patto'), and outbreaks of cholera that decimated the colonial community in 1832 and 1836 (City of Ottawa 1993F) (44).

The final functional element of the proposed Public Art Design were street kiosks, intended to "provide a means of consolidating business directories, tourist information, community and casual poster needs" (Corush, Sunderland, Wright 1993). Strong support for structures of this kind (as well as more formal information booths) was

demonstrated by various stakeholders at the Public Information Meetings, particularly as a means of controlling 'guerilla' posterage on inappropriate building and street surfaces in the area (City of Ottawa 1993E, p.39). The artists' concept was intended to improve on the design of pedestrian-oriented information kiosks located throughout the city by enhancing both the visual character of the neighborhood and addressing personal safety issues (providing a source of lighting) while increasing available space for both advertising and community uses. Apart from these formal artistic elements of the re-design, decisions regarding the planters, benches and other streetscape improvements were also made with the cooperation of the artist, in order to ensure as full an integration as possible amongst the various components of the Rideau Street Redevelopment. Provisions were also made to ensure that the artwork would respond as much as possible to the 'changing cultural context' by remaining flexible to the introduction of new artistic embellishments over time (City of Ottawa 1993, p.39).

The final Rideau Street Redevelopment Project Guidelines, including the public art components, were approved by the Regional Transportation Committee, the City of Ottawa and the Rideau Street B.I.A. by April 1993, and the actual redevelopment of the streetscape was completed in the fall of that year (45). In addition to the removal of the much maligned Transit Mall, this process entailed extensive changes to the design of the roadway and the physical appearance of the street as well as the installation of (most of) the artwork, which has subsequently been titled, collectively, *Shelter...Loss and Replacement*. Efforts were made by both the Project Team and the Rideau Street stakeholders to keep shoppers, commuters, and area businesses informed as to what kinds

of changes were going to occur along the street and when during this period of upheaval. Apart from concerns raised about changes to Rideau Street as a public transportation corridor and the nature of the cost-sharing formula worked out between the City of Ottawa and the Rideau Street B.I.A., the overall response generated by the implementation of the redevelopment scheme appeared to be fairly positive (Glastonbury 1993, Desmarais 1993). However, within the context of this large-scale project and the nature of the public debate at the time, it is fairly clear that Justin Wonnacott's artwork did not necessarily occupy a position of thematic or practical centrality. For the purposes of this exploration it is therefore necessary to evaluate *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* relative to the results of the project as a whole, as well as to compare the process to other participatory practices

Outcomes and Evaluation

As a ten year exercise in urban design, the Rideau Street experience has received a considerable amount of attention from commentators, critics, students, and planning practitioners. However, within this discourse of urban redevelopment and transportation planning at the local level, there is little or no mention made of the artwork that has now become a more or less permanent addition to the visual and cultural landscape of Ottawa's Lower Town. The purpose of this brief evaluation is to work towards a determination of the kind of reception that the artwork has engendered, the extent of the participatory nature of the exercise, as well as the linkages between the artistic components of the Rideau Street redevelopment and broader processes of urban change and transformation.

The official reopening of Rideau Street took place in October 1993, when City of Ottawa politicians gathered to commemorate the tearing down of the enclosures and their replacement with new bus shelters and a reconfigured traffic pattern. This gesture entailed a symbolic laying of a gold brick in the new cobblestone sidewalks in front of a crowd of 100 shoppers and business people (Desmarais 1993, p.B1). Just prior to this event, representatives from local Ottawa media were taken on a guided tour of the improvements between King Edward Avenue and Sussex Drive by members of the Project Team, a tour which included *Shelter...Loss and Replacement*. However, although the painted crosswalks and some of the other artistic treatments had been installed by that time, not all of Wonnacott's work had been completed. A flaw or deficiency was discovered in the concrete poured by contractors for the 'schematic' campfire installed along the sidewalk at Rideau and Waller Streets, a structural problem which has still not been adequately resolved. Two years after the corridor officially re-opened, the key component of the *Shelter ... Loss and Replacement* project also has yet to find a permanent home along Rideau Street. The "Food and Shelter" mural depicting a group of people making camp alongside a cedar bog was originally intended for installation along with a supporting structure amidst a small landscaped garden at Rideau and William Streets. However, after concerns were raised about the maintenance requirements and the safety of the supporting structure, the proposed site for the backlit mural was relocated to the side of a building on the south side of Rideau Street facing onto William. Objections have also been raised about the appropriateness of the photographic image - as it portrays young adults and older children with firearms and also depicts several dead rabbits - as wild game to be

prepared over the open fire. Despite these difficulties, negotiations are still continuing between the artist, building owners, City of Ottawa staff, and the Rideau Street Business Improvement Association, and the Public Art Program is confident that all outstanding issues surrounding the mural and its installation will soon be resolved (Adair 1995).

As part of the overall design strategy, Wonnacott's highly integrated and functional artistic treatments appear to have successfully enhanced the 'theme' of Rideau Street, as it was determined by the various stakeholders in the redevelopment process. The informally historic referencing present in the crosswalk embellishments, the inscriptions on the bus shelters, as well as the information kiosks, all subtly relate to each other and to the assorted tree planters, benches, lamps, and wide sidewalks that together comprise Rideau's updated streetscape configuration. In order to complement the existing network of crosswalks, the City of Ottawa's recent redevelopment of William Street has even included a painted crosswalk created by Justin Wonnacott as one of its design features, contributing to a sense of visual unity along the street.

Unlike these temporary treatments, the more costly permanent artworks have so far proven to be less than successful undertakings. Part of the reason for this may be the complicated nature of the site, in comparison with the fairly straightforward provisions which had to be made for *Shelter / Tissage*, *TransArt*, and the majority of municipal, regional, and federal projects in the National Capital Region. As Wonnacott has articulated, maintenance requirements and the needs of the snowplow are "the god on the street", and concerns over safety and durability eventually resulted in significant revisions to the original design guidelines (Pepper 1993, p.13). Due to the delay in the completion

of these remaining components, there has so far been no interpretive element installed which would provide closure for the project, either in the form of an identifying plaque, graphic illustration, or dioramic representation. This kind of effort would link the diverse elements together in a way that makes them accessible to members of the public who travel down Rideau Street. Although the NCC's Street Smart brochure admonishes tourists and strollers in the Byward Market area to "keep your eyes open along Rideau Street" for signs of Wonnacott's work, including the "Food and Shelter" photomontage (which has not yet been installed), people who are not accustomed to the incorporation of art into urban redevelopment initiatives may not know where to look (NCC 1995). These kinds of educative tools are crucial to the success of any innovative art in public places project in the 1990s.

Among the three projects, it is this City of Ottawa initiative that has attempted to both break down the boundaries between art and public space and to utilise art as a tool for contemporary socio-historical commentary. As a result, the opportunities for public involvement and engagement were both more numerous and more 'active' than in many other projects. What also makes *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* unique is its position in relationship to the activities of a variety of actors or partners, within both the public and private sectors. This broadening and complicating of the scope of participation and collaboration requires more detailed discussion at this time.

In terms of its participatory elements, the involvement of members of the public began early on in the commissioning process and continued until the project's completion.

Part of the reason for providing additional avenues for input may be linked to the strained relationships and general dissatisfaction that followed the implementation of the first Rideau Street. The presence of a Community Working Group, alongside the Staff Technical Committee and the Project Team, ensured a public 'voice' throughout the process, as the concept was refined and reviewed. The presentations made by the artist at public meetings and the feedback received, were also critical components in the development of the final artistic design guidelines, as art in such a central space must invariably operate within a framework that includes the public in its discourse. Among the comments received at these meetings which the artist responded to included concerns over the choice of colour and design of the crosswalks, which could be potentially confusing for both pedestrians and motorists (City of Ottawa 1993E, p.40). For Wonnacott, public art also carries with it a 'social responsibility' which is perhaps its greatest challenge, with the artist taking on "an ambassadorial role for contemporary art" (Pepper 1993, p.13). A sensitivity to social context means that whenever possible, public art can and should "offer contrast, commentary, or a critique" (Wonnacott 1993, p.2). Wonnacott's focus on shelter is interesting in this way, because of the previous role of the bus mall enclosures as a place of shelter and refuge for the homeless and street youth, and its replacement with small dispersed shelters designed to discourage loitering and encourage the flow of pedestrian traffic.

In terms of integration, the Rideau Street Redevelopment Project was in many ways a textbook example of the collaborative process, with the artist being involved from the beginning as a member of the Project/Design Team, having input into many of the

design decisions, including streetscaping, landscaping, and artistic elements for the site. The full complexity of the project and the nature of the cost-sharing solution (between the City and the Rideau Street B.I.A.) also opened up the process to a wider range of interests, particularly those of businesses along Rideau Street - stakeholders who defined many of the parameters that the artist would be operating within, and who had their own ideas about what the artistic embellishments could and should be accomplishing. The entire project came about almost entirely as the result of dissatisfaction with the past economic performance of the street, and the primary impetus for the redesign was to revitalize the area and to entice shoppers back to Rideau Street from suburban shopping malls (Dare 1993, p.A1). The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton also became involved in the approval process for the reintroduction of vehicular traffic onto the street, as well as entering into a maintenance and upkeep agreement for the crosswalks, which need to be re-stencilled and re-painted on a yearly basis.

Other less likely 'partners' in the Rideau Redevelopment Project illustrate the full complexity of the initiative of which the public art was one component, and the means through which any kind of large scale urban project almost inevitably includes the participation of a number of diverse individuals and agencies. Like any large North American metropolis, Ottawa's inner city has increasingly become a temporary refuge for people who, for a variety of reasons, do not have a home of their own. This issue of shelter, which Justin Wonnacott addressed through his work, held particular resonance for the street youth who were displaced when the bus mall was removed. Their needs were addressed through the implementation of the Rideau Street Youth Initiative (R.S.Y.I.).

This was a co-operative effort undertaken between area businesses, a number of social service agencies, the Police, and City of Ottawa politicians who were concerned about the impact that the dismantling of the shelters would have on street youth who had previously sheltered there. The goal was to provide opportunities for them “to earn money, produce and distribute a youth newspaper, and to express their thoughts through art, theatre, and music” as well as to improve the relationship between youth and area businesses, many of whom acted out of the perceived or real threat of panhandling and vandalism (Savage 1993). The R.S.Y.I. has since gone on to considerable success, finding new and alternative means for youth to earn money. The organization also received a \$200,000 grant in 1994, as a “lead site” for the Federal Government’s Job Youth Corps, in order to set up a recycling business (Brown 1994, p.B3). Although not directly related to the *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* project, the added participation of a number of unexpected partners in bringing life and vitality to the street could and should be understood to be part of the same process.

As a final component of the discussion of the City of Ottawa, public art, and Rideau Street, it is imperative to link this process of redevelopment, transformation, and change to occurrences in other locales. Perhaps the most widely cited recent case is that of Battery Park City in the late 1980s - a massive retail and office development in New York City which provided a plethora of opportunities for site-integrated collaborative sculpture to decorate a new 50 acre urban waterfront park, albeit without significant public input. Providing aesthetic embellishments to enhance newly (re)created spaces is

one of the most characteristic applications of the art in public places formula, particularly in jurisdictions which require a percent for art component to be included in all new large-scale projects. The reinvention of downtown public space as 'festive marketplaces' complete with artistic components is another example of the commercialization of space in order "to transform consumption of goods and services into a profitable recreational activity" (Carr et al. 1992, p.279).

There are clear and demonstrable links between the specific spatial and political arrangements associated with urban redevelopment in the 1990s (in particular the merging of the interests of business and state actors), and the role of public art and communities within this redefined and continually contested terrain of city spaces. Although the advent of both Rideau Street and *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* were the result of the dominance of certain conceptions of 'civic' virtues in the services of revitalization, the role of the public does not appear to have been completely eclipsed in the process. Avenues did remain open and available for critique, commentary, and participation.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Of tantamount importance to this analysis has been the various roles played by members of the public in each of the three experiences; both in theoretical and practical terms. Although there is no overarching formula that can be effectively employed to evaluate the significance of each public art project's participatory elements, there are a number of inter-related concepts which are of critical importance, and it is these which will be asserted in the final chapter of this thesis. In the context of contemporary urban planning discourses a monolithically conceived public interest can no longer be seen to occupy a position of theoretical or practical centrality, and art in public places programs can and do provide unique opportunities to explore the benefits of incorporating the interests of diverse communities in the development of alternative approaches to urban form-giving. In addition to articulating the commonalities which connect *Shelter / Tissage*, *TransArt*, and *Shelter...Loss and Replacement*, this chapter will briefly examine both the traditional and contemporary theoretical horizons of public participation as well as its uncertain future.

Public Art and the National Capital Region

The distinct programming and policy objectives of the National Capital Commission, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and the City of Ottawa have resulted in the commissioning of three art in public places projects which represent three quite distinct perspectives. Similar to most other interventions in the urban landscape,

none of the three projects can be considered to represent an unqualified success, either in aesthetic or functional terms. Many artists and art historians remain heavily critical of the kind of elitist “art by consensus” which art in public places programs and processes often produce - invariably by foregoing meaning and visual potency in order to avoid controversy (Houk 1988, p.9). Judgements concerning artistic merit, authenticity, and quality will always be characterized by disagreement and differences of opinion as to whether or not a particular public art project has ‘failed’, and work commissioned in the National Capital Region is no exception. However, to varying degrees and on certain levels, the projects under examination do represent success. They all contain elements which exert a positive influence on the urban environment, and these contributions may or may not become more evident with the passing of time. Several themes of overall comparison between the three case studies will be addressed, including the importance of site specificity and public awareness, as well as a consideration of each of the three projects’ adherence to the seemingly focal yet so loosely and problematically defined tenets of ‘public participation’.

‘Site specific’ (also referred to as ‘site-generated’, or ‘site-conditioned’) art has become one of the most readily invoked concepts within the pantheon of contemporary public art, as was illustrated in Chapter Two. By its simplest definition, for a work to be site specific it should reflect the circumstances and characteristics of the geographic place in which it is located, in order for it to be fully integrated into the existing urban fabric. Suitability of a work to a particular site is contingent upon a number of different factors,

including, but not limited to, its subject matter, the materials used in the work's construction, its physical size, and its scale in relation to the built environment within which it has been located. Adherence to these principles can often mean the difference between the success and failure of an art in public places project in a community.

To a large extent, the artistic treatments along Rideau Street and at the various Transitway Stations appear to have implicitly recognized the critical importance of this kind of localized contextualization. Specifically, the form and functionality of the integrated streetscape elements of Justin Wonnacott's *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* reflect a prioritization of the physical limitations of the site, and the need to orient the work around the needs of the pedestrian - providing respite to the often overwhelming presence of vehicular traffic along Rideau Street while simultaneously depicting and retelling history in new and innovative ways. Similarly, *A Brief History of Ottawa* attempts to assert its (by no means overwhelming) presence amidst the uniformity of the Transitway Station, by providing graphic illustration of the development of the Nation's Capital and the Ottawa River Valley along the concrete embankments of the underpass. Traditional both in its physical form and in the images which are being produced, this representational work does manage to engage with commuters in ways that many of the other *TransArt* works do not.

By contrast with the other commissions, *Shelter / Tissage* is not entirely 'site specific' in terms of its permanent geographic location in a public open space at Rideau Falls Park; however there does exist a kind of symbolic congruity to its positioning along the Ceremonial Route through the downtown cores of Ottawa and Hull. The social

construction of national identity reinforced by the presence of this work is somewhat diluted by its location at some distance from Parliament Hill and other national treasures whose virtues are extolled by the National Capital Commission. However, regardless of where in the Nation's Capital the sculpture was situated, it would probably still elicit a similar sort of response. It is above all a monument to current conceptions of Canadian identity, much as the other two pieces are invariably and almost immediately associated with a nascent 'civic' identity or culture in ways that many more abstract and conceptual works are not. This makes all three works, at least on some level, able to speak to members of the larger community who may otherwise be unable or unwilling to engage with more challenging or aesthetically unappealing aesthetic interventions. As with much 'official' public art, none of the three projects are expressly intended to be confrontational or to reveal an underlying commitment to an 'oppositional' politics; nonetheless they do offer an alternative commentary on history and civic identity. In this sense their site specificity enhances their value and meaning in relation to the urban milieu in which they are situated.

Another related issue highlighted by this study is the importance of education and public awareness in close association with the commissioning of works of art for public sites. In general, the public art projects implemented by the three government agencies in the Ottawa area mirror difficulties faced by programs in other locales, namely a chronic inability to encourage public awareness, education and communication. In these times of decreased public funding for the arts and culture, failure to foster any enduring sense of

engagement and acceptance can prove fatal to public art programming. Furthermore, there exists a clear and demonstrable link between the imparting of information to a particular community and the likelihood of that community accepting the final outcome of a particular public art project. Forging these kinds of 'passive' relationships with people have also been found to decrease the chances of a work being vandalised, defaced, or removed at a later date (Gee 1995, p.60).

Despite the seductive and 'participatory' rhetoric which permeates much of the policy literature produced by local government agencies, the process of public art commissioning remains a relatively closed and inaccessible one. Citizens are often completely unaware of the public art programs which are implemented in their own communities, and are uncertain as to how to deal with the results. This problem can be at least partially alleviated by improving awareness and understanding through the implementation of more comprehensive public information campaigns. Strategies that have been employed in various municipalities include everything from the widespread dissemination of information on upcoming commissions to educational components such as slide shows, annual public art awards, the creation and distribution of guides to public art resources in a particular urban community, the promotion of expanded media coverage, and the sponsoring of symposia on public art (City of Toronto 1991, p.42). Although a four-color pamphlet extolling the virtues of a recent commission cannot substitute for more active means of public participation, these are basic practices which can contribute to the greater inclusion of members of the public in the design of urban open spaces.

In the National Capital Region, each of the three agencies studied do allocate some resources in order to impart information to the community about projects which have been undertaken or are currently underway. In this regard, *Shelter / Tissage* was fortunate to be part of the much larger 'Canada 125' commemorative initiative, with the open studio significantly increasing public exposure to the project at the design stage. Since its installation at Rideau Falls Park, Stephen Brathwaite's work has also been accompanied by a permanently installed plaque describing the process and the outcome, and the NCC has also produced a *Shelter / Tissage* information pamphlet which is available at the Capital Information Centre in downtown Ottawa. This sculpture is also featured in the Street Smart booklet first produced in 1995.

Considering that it has been in existence for a number of years, the *TransArt* program continues to function in relative obscurity. Public programming related to the *TransArt* commissions and the production of a pamphlet on the artwork in the various Transitway Stations have both been planned but have so far not been completed (Gollner 1995). Although there is some media attention generated by the opening of new stations along the dedicated Transitway route, apart from small plaques accompanying the artistic elements, no substantial effort has been made to showcase the aesthetic elements of the Transitway's design. As fully integrated artworks located in an environment designed primarily for transporting large numbers of people, it is critical to take maximum advantage of any opportunity that is made available to encourage and cultivate awareness for existing public art programming.

In terms of the Rideau Street project, awareness and education around the public art components of the redevelopment were inevitably overshadowed by the larger, more comprehensive and more visually 'present' overhaul of the entire streetscape. However, articles did appear in Ottawa newspapers profiling Justin Wonnacott and his proposals for the redesign, and a media tour was conducted in conjunction with the reopening to promote the artistic elements which had been completed at that time. As previously mentioned, the project has yet to be completed, and there is no signage along Rideau Street providing a context for the various elements, the relationship between them, or where and how they can best be viewed. To ensure success, this kind of highly integrated treatment requires the devotion of some resources to informing and explaining what the work is about. Considered as a whole, the City of Ottawa's Public Art Program is much more community-based and oriented towards promotion and awareness than those at the regional level and the National Capital Commission; however it remains to be seen exactly what kind of reaction *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* will engender when/if it becomes fully incorporated into the public realm.

Ultimately, the most important element of this analysis is the role played by the public in shaping the design process. Public participation is a much maligned concept which in and of itself has consistently generated a great deal of debate, both within the realm of discussions related to public art as well as within the field of urban planning more generally. What does public participation mean? Is it still relevant? How do you engage with increasingly diverse, marginalized, and/or pluralistic communities? What kind of

criteria can be used to evaluate a project's participatory elements? These are all legitimate and pressing questions that continue to face the public art process in the National Capital Region and almost everywhere else. They are also questions with no easy answers.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that a critical language and/or a comprehensive set of criteria which can be adopted for the analysis of the production of public art does not yet appear to be fully developed. The false theoretical divides that separate the 'utopian' (art in public spaces) and 'critical' (art in public interest) relations between art, public space, political power, and cultural production appear to be as present today as they have ever been, constructing false dichotomies between forms of legitimate (or critical) and illegitimate (or co-opted) aesthetic practice (Mitchell 1992, p.3). The issues facing art in public places are further compounded by the idealistic models and value-laden language often used to perpetuate the view of a problem-free public culture adopted by public art agencies whereby potential audiences are presumed to be democratically unified and free of sources of political and social dissent (Doss 1995, p.44). Regardless of these constructs, core concepts exist within the literature which have been identified as being consistent with either support for participatory public art practices or a complete lack of support for the same.

In terms of *Shelter / Tissage*, *TransArt*, *Shelter...Loss and Replacement*, and the various public art traditions of the National Capital Commission and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, there does not appear to exist any overarching commitment to the integration of the community into the design and decision-making process. This kind of more direct citizen power and control, first identified by Sherry

Arnstein in her 'Ladder of Citizen Participation', is seen as transcending many of the more manipulative and 'tokenist' efforts to consult, inform, and engage with the public (Arnstein 1969 p.217). Despite the recent advent of much earlier and more significant collaboration between the artist, the architect, and other members of the design team, involvement of community members still does not usually extend much beyond the reception of information. In this way, the principles of 'new genre' public art which have generated so much support and attention amongst community activists, artists, and cultural theorists are clearly at odds with the more traditional conceptions of urban design which continue to permeate most government bureaucracies and municipal planning agencies.

As the NCC is no longer commissioning public art on a regular (or even semi-regular) basis, and the future of the RMOC's Art In Public Places Policy is presently in some doubt, it is the City of Ottawa's Public Art Program which appears most able to offer a sustained means of addressing the increasingly complex issues related to public participation. The illustration and evaluation of the measure of public involvement and consultation which exists for each of the three projects and within each of the three sponsoring agencies, indicates this difference in approach. The City of Ottawa clearly has more avenues of involvement open to those who are interested in taking part and more means of soliciting community involvement. Work is often done on a much smaller scale - allowing for less bureaucratic interference and red tape and encouraging different approaches to incorporating public art into communities. Projects like the 'Artists In Wading' Pool Painting Program, the Artist's Community Garden Initiative, the Rideau

Street Youth Initiative, and the Municipal Workshop's Artist In Residence Program, among others, expand the terrain of public art, as artists work in more non-traditional sites with a greater diversity of social groups and organizations. Opportunities for the development of symbiotic relationships, sponsorships, and partnerships between various public and private sector actors are also more readily encouraged at the local or municipal level, reflecting both the realities of arts programming in the 1990s and the somewhat problematic merging of public and private spheres of interest in the open spaces of the contemporary Canadian city.

The civic culture of a relatively well defined spatial, political and social entity such as the City of Ottawa has also allowed for a much more clearly defined delineation of bureaucratic responsibility and fewer restrictions on what kind of work is appropriate for sponsorship. However, in spite of much of the originality and ingenuity exhibited by the City of Ottawa, the work being done in the National Capital Region as an *oeuvre* is somewhat more traditional (as an art in public places initiative) when compared with some of the more 'participatory' urban design experiments that are now being carried out elsewhere. Much of this work offers unprecedented depth and breadth of opportunity for communities to participate in the process of place-making, as will soon become evident, and it is in the hope of the greater recognition of the principles which frame these alternative projects that a discussion of public participation and urban design will be undertaken at this time.

Redefining Public Participation in the 1990s

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the progressive planning movement of the 1960s and 1970s is the much maligned and often (mis)used concept of public participation. Now widely perceived to indicate the presence of public input and/or consultation, in its original incarnation the idea of public participation was conceived as a means of redistributing the power in the decision-making process in an era when large-scale urban renewal schemes were reshaping inner city neighborhoods from the top down. Sherry Arnstein's typological ladder of citizen participation, a model first developed in 1969, was provocatively designed to link to this kind of participation to the transfer of power from the 'haves' to the 'have-nots' in the arena of urban planning. Arnstein's theoretical conception of eight rungs of participation, ranging from 'manipulation' and 'therapy' to full 'citizen control' received a great deal of support from progressive planning professionals at the time, and have continued to permeate the methodology behind much public urban design policy (46).

More recently, theorists have attempted to update and critically reappraise Arnstein's scheme - placing it in a more practical context and broadening its applicability to encompass a wider range of contemporary urban, suburban, and rural situations. Desmond Connor's conception of a seven rung 'ladder' is oriented more towards the prevention and resolution of public disputes and suggests a more cumulative and interconnected relationship between the various rungs (47). Connor also places crucial emphasis on the need for a sense of equity to exist amongst the various actors involved in

any participatory process, in order to ensure more sustainable and fair resolutions (Connor 1987, p.256).

An additional theoretical framework, developed by Walter Potapchuk, confronts the tendency for planners to adopt adversarial participatory strategies strictly as a means of minimizing opposition to new and potentially contentious proposals. An alternative strategy, in the form of collaborative processes intended to build consensus, articulates various levels of shared decision-making and stresses the importance of involving the public as early on in the process as possible. The simultaneous use of numerous forms of citizen participation, including large-scale collaborative planning, community-based working groups and an array of “parallel and coordinated processes” are also considered essential to the successful implementation of legitimate participatory practices in the 1990s (Potapchuk 1991, p.167). Further refinements to the public participation ‘ladder’ have included (among other things) an array of collaborative and consensual proposals which link urban design, social action and citizen empowerment together in a more pluralistic and “wholistic urban perspective” (Kraushaar 1988, p.97).

Public art, when it transcends the constraints of the formula under which it so often operates, produces places and experiences which are a testament to the potential benefits of these efforts towards a theoretical redefinition of what participation means and does. By offering communities opportunities to create spaces and places and by expanding and exploding traditional forms of public participation in urban planning, public art also has important ramifications for the ways cities are designed and who has power in the decision-making process. In this sense, art in the public interest initiatives can be

linked to the larger project of community-based solutions to the challenges and questions posed by the contemporary urban landscape. This project involves a recognition of the constantly shifting and contestatory nature of interests and requires an engagement with new forms of democracy which more explicitly address notions of difference and power (Watson and Gibson 1995, p.259).

From Theory to Practice

Although both the rhetoric and boundful idealism surrounding participatory processes remain firmly embedded in urban planning, over time there have been few if any real changes in the extent of citizen involvement in urban design decision-making. The cumulative effects of both the depoliticization and the mainstreaming of public participation has resulted in the more passive or consultative role becoming an end in and of itself - masking the fundamental lack of democracy that continues to exist within community planning (Grant 1990, p.14). Involvement continues to amount to little more than an elaborate and expensive polling and public relations exercise, despite a number of recent theoretical reappraisals.

Regardless of these serious shortcomings, it is now, at a time when the domination of private and/or corporate interests are ever more prevalent, that the need for real and substantive opportunities for public participation is the greatest. As a result, alternative, small-scale, practical, and interdisciplinary experiments in urban form-giving, such as 'new genre' public art or an art that *is* in the public interest, offer critically important means of providing opportunities for people to define and shape the environment in which they live.

It is the nature of these responses in relation to conceptions of commodification, entrepreneurialism, and city imaging that allow for particularly insightful critique and commentary on the multi-layered and inter-connected nature of urban public spaces and places.

Regardless of whether they are identified under the rubric of public design, community design, socially responsible design, participatory planning, or progressive planning, such 'multivocal' aesthetic interventions are framed by a recognition of the power imbalances that continue to exist both in society and in the planning process. They also address the problematic role of public art in the selling of places, as an increasingly prominent and sophisticated conduit for the expression and manipulation of urban culture. Perhaps the most critical concept which permeates this detailed study of the three projects in the National Capital Region involves the recognition of the potential benefits of an art in the public interest which can and does link communities, artists, and issues, as well as cultural and financial resources, in new and unanticipated ways. To varying degrees, *Shelter/Tissage*, *TransArt*, *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* and the respective public art programs from which they originate all possess innate qualities which are in some way consistent with the promotion of a more accurate understanding of, and engagement with, the built environment. It is hoped that a study of the kind of terrain that these works represent will have a heightened influence on the theory and practice of designing the cities of tomorrow and that a place for public art and public participation will be better secured within that future.

1. *National War Memorial* (1939), Ottawa

2. Maya Lin, *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1981) Washington, D.C.

3. Eero Saarinen, *Gateway Arch* (1966) St. Louis, Missouri

4. Pablo Picasso, *Head of a Woman* (1967) Chicago, Illinois

5. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park* (1979-1984), Rosslyn, Virginia

6. Sheila Levrant de Bretteville with The Power of Place, *Biddy Mason: Time and Place* (1990) Los Angeles, California

7. ACT UP, *Silence=Death* (1986)

8.Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Homeless Projection* (1986)

9.Michael Snow, *The Audience*
(1989) Toronto, Ontario

10.Leila Armstrong, *Season's Greetings*
(1993) Vancouver, B.C.

11. Tourist Map of Ottawa and Hull, including Confederation Boulevard

Discover how Canadians have made their mark in the world

How did
Canada save
the banana?

Who wrote
the Universal
Declaration
of Human
Rights?

Which Canadian
Prime Minister won a
Nobel Prize?

Canada and the World

Look for the answer to these questions in our
multimedia exhibit.

What is the
name of the
monument
in the
Capital
that honours
the Blue
Berets?

Who was
the first
Canadian
woman to
travel in
space?

Celebrate Peace —
October 7, 8 and 9
(For the whole family)

October 7
2 p.m., on stage: FASSTI-mô,
a children's show celebrating
harmony between people.

October 8
1 p.m. and 3 p.m., on stage:
Helena Fine. Through her joyful

songs she teaches children about
the diverse cultures that make up
Canada.

October 9
11 a.m. and 2 p.m., on stage: "A
World of Stones," presented by
Salamander Theatre. Performances
of traditional stories from around
the world introduce children to the
magic of legend.

Rideau Falls Park

Sussex Drive
From September 2 to October 9,
1995, weekends only, from 10 a.m.
to 6 p.m.

Free admission
Parking at NRC (weekends only)

Information 239 5000

National Capital Commission
Commission de la Capitale nationale
The National Capital Commission is a Crown corporation
of the Government of Canada.

13. Extent of Urban Growth in Ottawa-Carleton, 1993

14. Confederation Square, Ottawa

15. Guido Molinari, *Hommage to Samuel Beckett* (1969) Ottawa

16. John Hooper, *Balancing* (1981) Ottawa

17. Lea Vivot, *The Secret Bench of Knowledge* (1993) Ottawa

IT'S ABOUT TIME

Timespan, the unique spherical clock that appears to float high above the World Exchange Plaza, is a one of a kind timepiece that has captured the attention and curiosity of visitors to Canada's Parliament Buildings, downtown office workers, and engineers and architects from around the world.

An original design element of the innovative plaza, Timespan travels a continuous route across the penthouse roof to the east and west edges of the World Exchange Plaza. The ball is at the eastern side of the 190 foot trolley at 6:00 a.m., at the western side at 6:00 p.m., and at the centre of the truss at noon and midnight.

A highly visual component of the Ottawa skyline, this 800 pound ball, measuring 12 feet in diameter, reflects light by day and is illuminated from within at night to provide a provocative glow.

Since February 1991, Timespan has successfully travelled across the roof of the World Exchange Plaza to the delight and fascination of all who catch a glimpse of its timely presence.

18. Promotional Material for the World Exchange Plaza, Ottawa

19. Chung Hung, *Twelve Points in a Classical Balance* (1982) Ottawa

20. Patti Homonylo, *Patti Goes To Ottawa* (1995)

21. Robert Murray, *Tundra* (for Barnett Newman) (1973) Ottawa

22. Pierre Bourgault Legros, *Three forms by the sea* (1984) Hull, P.Q.

27. Stephen Brathwaite, *Shelter/Tissage* (1992) Ottawa

28. Jack Harman, *Queen Elizabeth II* (1992) Ottawa

29. John Hooper, *Terry Fox* (1983) Ottawa

ART

FESTIVAL PLAZA

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, through the Art in Public Spaces Program, wishes to announce a competition for the R.M.O.C. Festival Plaza. The site is located south of Laurier Avenue, bounded by the Drill Hall, the Provincial Courthouse, and the Ottawa-Carleton Centre.

An artist or a multi-disciplinary artistic team is to be selected to work with the architect to integrate an artistic element(s) into the Plaza design. The project is presently in the design stage with an opportunity to integrate visual art, music, video and/or text into a variety of locations including a water feature, a wooded grove or passive landscaped areas. All art will be located in exterior locations.

BUDGET

The budget of \$ 24,500 includes the artist's fee, the maquette fee, all taxes, travel expenses, insurance, and structural engineering fees.

The successful artist(s) must have a G.S.T. registration number.

ELIGIBILITY

All local artists, with an established residency within 150 kilometres of Ottawa, are eligible.

30. Festival Plaza: Call for Expression of Interest

31. Gerald McMaster,
Untitled (1991)
Ottawa

32. Juan Geuer,
Carnavalesque
(1993) Orleans

33. Pat Durr, *Linkages* (1994) Ottawa

34. Susan Feindel, *The Mosaic Mural* (1994) Ottawa

35. Adrian Gollner and Graham Bolton, *A Brief History of Ottawa* (1994) Ottawa

Come Join in the Fun!

Soyez de la fête!

GRAND OPENING DAY

Saturday September 2

Opening Ceremonies

11:00 a.m.

Several hours Billings Bridge Shopping Plaza

Guided Tours and Special Activities

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Two other transit stations and the Transitway are the new transit hub for the city. Located in the heart of the new Billings Bridge Shopping Plaza, the Transitway will serve the city's growing population and provide a link to the city's major employment centers. The Transitway will also provide a link to the city's major employment centers. The Transitway will also provide a link to the city's major employment centers.

What's your time in transit? It's yours! Whether you're a commuter, a student, or a visitor, the Transitway will provide a link to the city's major employment centers. The Transitway will also provide a link to the city's major employment centers.

Billings Bridge Station

Two other transit stations and the Transitway are the new transit hub for the city. Located in the heart of the new Billings Bridge Shopping Plaza, the Transitway will serve the city's growing population and provide a link to the city's major employment centers. The Transitway will also provide a link to the city's major employment centers.

Heron Station

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Walkley Station

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Greenboro Station

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Bike or Blade for Blake

Greenboro Station, North Station and Johnson Road

2:15 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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Routes serving the new Southeast Transitway stations

North

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37. General Idea, *Image Virus: AIDS Logo* (1991) Seattle, Washington

38. Catherine Widgery, *Objective Memory* (1992) Ottawa

39.c.j. fleury, *The Mechanics of Gauging a Trade* (1995) Ottawa

40 *Artists Gardens* (1995) Ottawa

41. Waine Wing, *Untitled* (1995)

Total height of structure < 2.5 m
length < 3.5 m
depth app. 1.5 m.

Image (photo-silhouette) embedded into fibreglass with varnish/sealant proof coating). The image has a white border and is bordered with green framing affixed to the supporting structure. The image is set in a similar landscape to the site 160 years ago and depicts a campfire and a group of people making camp on the edge of a cedar 'bog' area, to one side there is someone preparing a meal and it is nighttime.

Irregularly shaped landscaped garden w/ perimeter of blast rock to provide casual seating and protection from snow removals, planted with hardy and apparently indigenous perennials such as daylilies, wild flowers and ornamental grasses interspersed with tough low maintenance shrubs. IE no begonias, tulips or petunias, the idea is to evoke a sense of time and place for this special site.

Structure to complement garden and support artwork. Seed boxes are used to suggest the use of relic materials from the removed shelter and the form is intended to suggest a 'lean-to' type of sheltering space that is relevant to the historical references being used in the artists' recommendations.

Inherent in the design of this site is the fabrication of an open and visible structure that does not become a place of concealment for 'ne-er-do-wells' and that the landscaping provides seating but is a truly uncomfortable place to sleep.

42. Public Art Guidelines for the Rideau Street Redevelopment Project

43. Justin Wonnacott, *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* (1993) Ottawa

44. Justin Wonnacott, *Shelter...Loss and Replacement* (1993) Ottawa

45. View of Rideau Street, Ottawa (1993)

46. Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969)

47. Desmond Connor's New Ladder of Citizen Participation (1988)

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