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Nurturing neighborhoods: Buster Simpson's eco-art

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NURTURING NEIGHBORHOODS: BUSTER SIMPSON'S ECO-ART

by

Anna Marie Heineman

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Art History
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Craig Adcock

ABSTRACT

Buster Simpson is a Seattle-based artist who creates work that revolves around environmental issues in public settings. His ecological messages reach local communities through works that are often funded by percent-for-art programs, non-profit organizations such as schools and museums, and other public institutions. By using recycled materials or by purifying water, Simpson's public art draws attention to the local environment, and his works provide examples of ways that people can care for their local surroundings. My thesis sheds light on Simpson's public and environmental work, detailing the creative manner in which he incorporates history, education, and artistic complexity into his sculptures. Through their aesthetics and their real-world utility, Simpson's works nurture neighborhoods.

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Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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To Gary

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ABSTRACT

Buster Simpson is a Seattle-based artist who creates work that revolves around environmental issues in public settings. His ecological messages reach local communities through works that are often funded by percent-for-art programs, non-profit organizations such as schools and museums, and other public institutions. By using recycled materials or by purifying water, Simpson's public art draws attention to the local environment, and his works provide examples of ways that people can care for their local surroundings. My thesis sheds light on Simpson's public and environmental work, detailing the creative manner in which he incorporates history, education, and artistic complexity into his sculptures. Through their aesthetics and their real-world utility, Simpson's works nurture neighborhoods.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

INTRODUCTION

On June 18, 2009, Buster Simpson crossed the stage at the Americans for the Arts Annual Convention to receive the 2009 Public Art Award. The award "honored innovative contributions to and exemplary commitment and leadership in public art."[1] Eloise Damrosch, executive director of the Regional Arts and Cultural Council in Portland, Oregon, nominated Simpson for the award. In her assessment, Simpson

> has never wavered from caring about and addressing critical environmental issues in all kinds of settings with a completely unique personal voice and style. Buster has been "green" long before anyone really knew what that meant. He is a brilliant thinker, highly original artist, and treasured member of the country's public art community.[2]

As he accepted his nomination, over one thousand conference members cheered and clapped, honoring Simpson's significant oeuvre. Some conference attendees had worked with Simpson, others were Seattleites familiar with his work, and still others came from across the country to acknowledge the importance of Simpson's forty-year artistic career.

Despite his well-deserved recognition, Simpson's work has not received the art historical attention it deserves. I claim this neglect may be due to his works' public location, because his complex and symbolic art certainly rivals the canonical production of more famous artists during the last four decades. This dissertation will endeavor to shed light upon his oeuvre by examining and analyzing his unique contributions to contemporary art.

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[1] I was present at the 2009 Americans in the Arts Conference in Seattle and witnessed him receive the award. The quote is from the conference pamphlet.

[2] Eloise Damrosch's words were reprinted in an online article, which highlighted the conference awards. See http://www.artsusa.org.

An Artist who makes "Art for Public Places"

Simpson's work resides primarily in public spaces. Public art is not novel—it has spanned many millennia and many cultures—but the term *public art* was coined only forty years ago. Throughout the past forty years, the direction of art placed in public settings has shifted.[3] As Arlene Raven aptly notes, "Public art isn't a hero on a horse anymore."[4] As opposed to just placing a sculpture in a public place, most artists today stress both the "public" and the "art" equally.[5] And some who work in the public sphere, such as Simpson, take both aspects of "public"—the physical public domain and the people who reside in it—into consideration when creating their work.

Most of Simpson's works focus on the community, but he does not call himself a public artist, believing that the term is too limiting. Instead, he says, "I just like to be called an artist; that keeps it kind of vague. That's the best."[6] He also questions the existence of "public art." He claims that "there's art being put in public, but there's not public artists. When you work in the public, it requires different skills, but you still have

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[3] A myriad of books have been written on the complexities of defining public art. For good examples, see Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis, eds., *The Practice of Public Art* (New York: Routledge, 2008); John Beardsley, *Art in Public Places: A Survey of Community-Sponsored Projects Supported by the National Endowment for the Arts* (Washington DC: Partners for Livable Places, 1981), 54-63; Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2002); Malcolm Miles, *Art for Public Places: Critical Essays* (Winchester, Hampshire: Winchester School of Art Press, 1989); and Arlene Raven, ed., *Art in the Public Interest* (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989).

[4] Raven, 1.

[5] Kathy Halbreich, "Stretching the Terrain: Sketching Twenty Years of Public Art," in *Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places*, ed. Pam Korza (Amherst, MA: Arts Extension Service, 1988), 9.

[6] Robin Updike, "Expanding the Canvas for Public Art—Agitator Buster Simpson's Works are Of the People, and For the People," *Seattle Times,* January 18, 1998, E5. Although Simpson prefers this term, this dissertation will refer to him as an artist who creates public art for the sake of clarity. No disrespect is intended.

to be an artist."[7] To work well in this field, the artist needs to be equipped with good listening and collaboration skills. The artist is not "making something that will go on somebody's wall," as Simpson notes.[8] Rather because the patron consists of a neighborhood or a city, the artist must meet different demands.

Despite the fact that Simpson believes artists are artists regardless of where they place their work, he also thinks that artists who make work for public places are stigmatized by museum officials and other artists. They receive negative criticism for doing work that is aesthetically jarring or incomprehensible to the public.[9] Kathy Halbreich, associate director of New York's Museum of Modern Art, alludes to these core differences: "Unlike museums, the public realm has no storage places, no warehouse where one can ponder in private how an object once lauded by the cognoscenti now can look so academic, so juiceless. Recent experiments—all valiant attempts to define public art and to challenge or strengthen the systems which make it possible—remain exposed to view."[10] Simpson criticizes "juiceless" work as well—but adds that although there is poorly made public art, there is "also a lot of crappy [museum] art out there, too."[11] In the case of public art, its conspicuous location allows it to be scrutinized in ways that the art in museums is not. Museums have curators to provide informative signs; museum

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[7] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Tom Eccles, "Plop," in *Plop: Recent Projects of the Public Art Fund*, ed. Susan K. Freedman, et al. (London and New York: Merrell in association with Public Art Fund, 2004), 7. "Plop art" in public places will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2.

[10] Halbreich, 11. While working as the Director of the List Visual Arts Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Halbreich helped administer the "one percent for art" program. This funded the collaboration between Scott Burton, Kenneth Noland, and Richard Fleischner and the architect I. M. Pei while creating the Jacob Wiesner Building. See, Jeffrey L. Cruikshank and Pam Korza, *Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places* (Amherst, MA: Arts Extension Service, 1988), 300.

[11] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

tours or publications can educate patrons as well. This capacity is more limited when the work is out in the public.

Moreover, in the traditional art world, museum directors, art critics, and gallery owners are intricately intertwined. These networks often leave out artists who make work for public spaces. Although many museums and galleries are run with an open-mindedness towards collecting, there are some in the art world who see a conspiracy behind collecting and exhibition practices that disenfranchises some artists. Art historian Walter Grasskamp wrote:

> The disciples of this popular theory like to attribute the success of contemporary art to a mafia of clever dealers with a clique of corrupt museum staff members and obsequious collectors who have allegedly managed to abuse the greed of the public for novelties to such a degree that charlatans and botchers are installed as important artists at tax-payers' expense. The propagandists of this theory—not infrequently unsuccessful artists or artists who have other conceptions of art, but also museum directors and critics—generally deliver such useless and unfounded polemics that to disprove them is not difficult, and to discuss them in the first place would be superfluous, if the conspiracy theorists did not know how to foster and exploit the reservations of numerous museum-goers about contemporary works of art.[12]

Contemporary artists enter into the art historical cannon when they exhibit work in prestigious art shows, such as *Documenta,* an exhibition of contemporary art that takes place in Germany every five years. Grasskamp continues: "Many artists who were successful at *Documenta* now got into the text and colour-plate section of a standard work; what more could they want? This is how art history is produced."[13]

Documenta XII, held in 2007, placed over one-hundred artists' works on view for 754,000 visitors. Among the visitors were over four-thousand art professionals and more

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[12] Walter Grasskamp, "For Example, *Documenta*, or How Is Art History Produced?" in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (New York: Routledge, 1996), 49.

[13] Ibid., 54.

than fifteen-thousand journalists.[14] Gallery owners, museum directors, and art writers flocked to *Documenta* in order to witness the new work on the scene. As Martha Ward notes, scholars view exhibitions as "nodal points in the social history of art."[15] Thus, prominently exhibited work continues to affect the art world long after the show ends.

From such venues, canonical artists can have their work collected by museums or sell their work in galleries. Gallery owners often get large percentages of the profits from the artists' work that they sell. In New York City, an average upscale gallery receives from 50 to 60 percent of the proceeds from selling work.[16] The commission price often increases in relation to the gallery's national and international reputation. The gallery also provides exhibition space, advertising for the work, and promotion for the artist. These gallery owners, agents, and dealers work with the most prestigious artists in the contemporary art world; likewise, specific artists benefit from having their work shown at these powerful galleries.

For those who adhere to this "conspiracy theory," galleries can carry clout. For example, one can point to the Dwan gallery, which produced enough hype to label a new genre of art: "Earthworks." This was an approach that came to the forefront of sculpture, writing, and criticism in 1968.[17] From the show, artists, critics, and historians have

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[14] This information came from *Documenta'*s official website: http://www.documenta12.de. The Venice Biennale is another exhibition of this caliber.

[15] Martha Ward, "What's Important About the History of Modern Art Exhibitions?" in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (New York: Routledge, 1996), 318. Also see Kathryn Floyd's thesis, which analyses the history of *Documenta* and "the concept of history it embodies": *Between Change and Continuity: Documenta, 1955-2005* (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 2006).

[16] David Silver, *Smart Start-Ups: How Entrepreneurs and Corporations Can Profit by Online Communities* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2007), 212.

[17] Ten men participated in the "Earthworks" show. This show will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3. For information analyzing Virginia Dwan's instrumental roll in creating this exhibition, which furthered the careers of these artists, see Suzaan Boettger, "Behind the Earth Movers: The Adventurous Support of Dealer Virginia Dwan Allowed Earthwork Artists

written about and analyzed the work coming from this one particular gallery.[18] It should be remembered, however, that all included parties benefit from each other. The gallery owner often receives half of the selling price, the museum director and curators clamor over highly-valued work to add to his or her museum's collection, and the critic is able to publish articles or books about highly sought after art. The art world is intricately connected.

Where then, does public art fit in this art world? Despite the high reputation of a public artist like Simpson, not one artist who has created work primarily for the public sphere in the last forty years is perceived on the same level as Robert Smithson, who also created work outside gallery and museum walls, or Bruce Nauman, a conceptual artist who was chosen to represent the United States at the 2009 Venice Biennale. Although Simpson's work is also highly conceptual, he believes this discrepancy is the result of a general disregard for public art among key players in the private sector and among museum professionals.[19]

For Simpson, public art is stigmatized because it is different in two ways. First, a work like his *Beckoning Cistern* (1997), a blue, whimsical cistern designed to capture

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Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, Robert Smithson and Others to Realize Their Pioneering Projects," *Art in America* 92 (April 2004): 54-63.

[18] Other art historical movements coincided with work being displayed in galleries. James Meyer claims that Minimalist artists only began to receive critical acclaim after gallery shows. In 1966, Donald Judd's exhibit of factory-made work at the Leo Castelli gallery and Carl Andre's exhibition of *Equivalents I-VIII* at Tibor de Nagy Art Gallery were two shows that garnered much attention. See James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 7.

[19] As Simpson said, "there's pressure on public art administrators that have been pulled by museum curators that they need to bring more museum artists into their projects. And they oblige them, and they found that this was an incredible labor sink because artists are used to having their dealer who gets 50% of the take, which they don't get when they get public art. This is another reason why public art is not looked on very fondly by the private sector, because dealers can't get their 50% commission on public art." Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

rain runoff from a nearby building, fits only in its Seattle neighborhood (fig. 1).[20] Removing the work from the space—taking it out of its context—destroys the essence of the piece. Public art that is connected to its space cannot be displayed in an international exhibition, nor can the work be sold in a gallery. Thus, Simpson and others maintain that artists who create work in the public sphere are often pigeonholed and are rarely included in art history textbooks, gallery exhibitions, or international juried shows.[21]

Second, Simpson believes that public artists are shunned by the private sector because public art generates large amounts of money that operate largely outside the art market. It is not funded by wealthy dealers who want to add to their private collection; instead, public works are often paid for with tax dollars.[22] The "Percent for Art" ordinance decrees that one or one-half percent of a state funded building's budget must go toward the purchase of art.[23] What makes this business interaction different from galleries is that one hundred percent of the budget goes directly to the artist. Of course, because tax monies are used, stipulations are made—all the material costs, production costs, labor costs, and traveling costs must come out of this fund. The artist, however, is able to use all of the proceeds however he or she sees fit.[24] Because of this protocol,

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[20] Simpson's *Beckoning Cistern* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

[21] H. H. Arnason does include a section about public art in his textbook. The artists he includes, however, either created controversial public sculpture, such as Richard Serra's *Tilted Art* (1981-89) and Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veteran's Memorial* (1982), or more acceptable work such as Pablo Picasso's *Chicago Monument* (1966) and Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen's *Batcolumn* (1977) and *Spoonbridge and Cherry* (1985-88). H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art,* 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 621-25.

[22] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[23] The percentage and rules for the "percent for art" ordinance varies by city and state. For various funding models, and how to implement them, see the essays in Pam Korza, ed., *Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

[24] In 1979, the state of Iowa enacted legislation, which required one-half of one percent of all state building's funds to go towards the purchase of art. See Iowa Code 304A, sections 8-14.

Simpson refers to public art production as the "cash cow" of the art world and believes that because galleries, museums, critics, and dealers are "getting cut out of a lot of money," they are eager to stigmatize public artists.[25]

Norie Sato, a Seattle-area public artist, believes much of the stigmatization of public art stems from the amount of influence that the public has on the creation of the work.[26] This concept is different from the idealized "genius" artist—like Jackson Pollock—who created work regardless of whether or not his patrons or the art world accepted him or his work.[27] Instead of coming straight from the independent mind of the artist and ending on the museum's walls or floor, in order to create public art, many opinions have to be taken into account, many proposals have to be submitted, and significant alterations must often be made before the final product is unveiled. In a public art commission, the size of the floor may directly affect the size of the mosaic the artist will create, and the color scheme of the building may sway the artist's color choices. The essence of the work, however, and the artist's vision remain his or her own.

Artists who do not take the space and the community into consideration run the risk of creating what is informally known as "plop art." Plop art, a term credited to architect James Wines, connotes a work of art that is summarily placed in a space, often in an inappropriate manner. Animosity toward unsuccessful public art works can be great, particularly since it was paid for by taxpayer dollars.[28] According to Suzanne Lacy, in

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[25] "Whereas art in public places, or public art, where the thing is, there's this stigma. The critics of the world, and the museum directors, are all starting to get pissed off about public art because it's the cash cow. And they're getting cut out of a lot of money." Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[26] Personal interview with Norie Sato, October 6, 2009.

[27] See Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *Jackson Pollock: An American Genius* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1988).

[28] Tom Eccles, "Plop: Recent Projects of the Public Art Fund," 8. Susan Freedman's compilation of essays includes successful public works. Tom Eccles's essay includes information about Jenny Holzer's L.E.D. sign works and Felix Gonzalez-Torres's billboards, which were

order to create successful public work, public artists should use a "chat them up" procedure, in which community members, architects, and city planners are consulted.[29] Simpson has employed this method from the very beginning of his public art career.

Simpson is more concerned with the public than the institution, which is not to say that he rejects museums; he has exhibited his work in a number of museums throughout his artistic career.[30] His focus, however, remains in the public sphere:

> I was always kind of intrigued with how far you could go with the most difficult venue, and that was the public projects. I mean, if you could pull off to the public process, these notions of making a dense city green, and bringing some sort of fantastic aesthetic thinking into the mix. That would be really great because you've got tax dollars working for you, you have the patronage of the public.[31]

It should be noted, however, that although some of his work in museums have been discussed in detail by curators in articles and exhibition catalogues, many of his public art works have not been fully analyzed.[32] One of the downsides of working in the public sector, is the lack of written discourse that follows the installation of a public work.

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funded by the Public Art Fund in New York City and placed in public spaces. The Public Art Fund, however, is an independent, non-government organization. This independence often allows more freedom for the artists than, say, the "Percent for Art" programs, which are implemented in state-funded buildings.

[29] Arlene Raven, "Introduction," in *Art in the Public Interest,* ed. Arlene Raven (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 11.

[30] Simpson's work has been exhibited in twenty-six group shows across the country since 1979. Also, his work has been included in museum exhibitions in the Seattle Art Museum, the Hirshhorn, the Queens Museum in New York City, and the Contemporary Institute of Art in Boston, among others.

[31] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009. "I had shows from time to time at the Seattle Art Museum and at the Hirshhorn. It's when I'm asked to. I don't have a dealer."

[32] Exhibition catalogues and books include Ned Rifkin, *Buster Simpson WORKS,* exh. cat. (Washington DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1989); Ned Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle,* exh. cat. (Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum, 1983); and Barbara C. Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artist's Interpretations and Solutions* (New York: Queens Museum of Art and Rizzoli International, 1992).

Simpson's work has, unquestionably, received press in terms of newspaper articles, popular journal essays, and small publications, but many of these discuss only the visual details without much critical analysis. Also, despite Simpson's four decades of strong work, his oeuvre has never been fully documented.

Project Overview

This dissertation examines the public art of Buster Simpson. His works not only take the community into consideration, they also contain didactic elements that are intended to educate the public. His works are far from being "plopped" down sculptures in public places. Instead, his complex designs nurture neighborhoods by educating people about environmentalism. They also promote caring for the space in which the works are situated.

The first chapter of my dissertation examines Simpson's background and his early philosophies. After exposure to conceptual art during his graduate studies at the University of Michigan, he implemented a conceptual approach in his own work. While teaching and co-founding an art school called Pilchuck, a glass school in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains in Washington, he began to make art materials from the natural elements of the environment around him. Because shelters, kilns, and living space had to be created in a remote setting, Simpson and others had to be resourceful. Moreover, the work Simpson created in that setting had a highly conceptual slant that is comparable to the avant-garde work that was being created elsewhere during the late 1960s and early 1970s. After leaving Pilchuck, Simpson incorporated this conceptual and resourceful approach into all of his early sculpture.

Chapter two discusses Simpson's early work in the public domain after he had moved to Seattle, Washington. Simpson's approach takes more than just a particular site into consideration—he also examines the unique characteristics of the space. The term "space" is understood to mean the three-dimensional realm in which objects are

positioned and events occur. “Space-specific” is a more appropriate definition for the place in which Simpson’s work is located as compared to “site-specific,” the more commonly used term. An analysis of four different works demonstrates that Simpson’s installations contain more than formal complexity: they promote environmental awareness, they remember the native peoples of Seattle, and they emphasize the actual neighborhood in which they are located.

Chapter three provides further context for Simpson’s art, which is rooted in Eco-Art, a contemporary direction that is grounded in environmental awareness. Simpson’s commingling of science and art provides ecological information for people who see his installations. For instance, Simpson threw limestone “lozenges” into the Hudson River—similar to the shape and chemical make-up of antacid pills—in order to decrease the acidity of the water. This work encouraged viewers to care about their local environment.

The fourth chapter outlines Simpson’s ecological work in urban spaces by examining two installations (one in Seattle, the other in Alexandria, Virginia). Both works deal with urban water cycles. Simpson transforms urban streets into garden installations. By putting rainwater to use in irrigating plants, the installation also makes the water cycle visible to the residents, showing people how natural processes are involved in filtering and slowing rainwater runoff.

The fifth and final chapter discusses Simpson’s most recent works, which he calls “Master Plans.” These Master Plans outline public art projects, environmental agendas, and urban renewal schemes. They are complex and contain broad views on how to clean up polluted waterfronts or to make particular neighborhoods more sustainable. The plans are detailed, and include urban planning, water mitigation, and environmental conservation. Although the “Master Plans” have not been realized in the sites for which they were designed, Simpson has placed the detailed instructions on his website. The conceptual work is his, but if a motivated team wanted to bring his ideas to fruition, the portable document format could be downloaded and used. This idea—placing his creative

ideas on the internet for anyone to access—is yet another way that Simpson's work benefits communities and nurtures neighborhoods.

Simpson's understudied, yet significant body of work has been revered by his colleagues for decades, but it has never been fully analyzed. This dissertation aims to shed light on Simpson's complex, environmentally attuned, and educational work. Simpson has "helped define contemporary and environmental public art," and it is high time that he receive the credit he deserves.[33]

[33] This quote is from the president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, Robert L. Lynch. The quote was recorded in the press release of the award: http://www.artsusa.org.

Figure 1: 81 Vine Street Building and *Beckoning Cistern* (2003). Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives.

CHAPTER 1: BRANDED FROM THE BEGINNING

In a response to an installation Simpson had at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in 1990, Ned Rifkin, then head-curator, wrote, "in virtually every work of art he has made since 1969, Simpson has been primarily motivated by subject matter that sets out to raise viewers' consciousness about a particular social or ecological problem. In most of his pieces, Simpson hopes to help solve an existing problem by using his artwork as a paradigm for change."[34] Although Rifkin wrote this nearly two decades ago, this approach has remained basic to Simpson's art.

Most assessments of Simpson's career start with his involvement with Woodstock, the music festival that occurred in 1969. Simpson, however, cites his early childhood and educational experiences as being more formative. I claim his early background experiences, along with his tenure as co-director of the Pilchuck Glass School, shaped his signature style of creating public works geared toward the community. The lessons that Simpson learned from his first three large works will also be analyzed in this chapter. In his first collective performance piece, *The Selective Disposal Project* (1973), Simpson experimented with recycling an abandoned space. He cleaned up an unused floor of a building and presented the process of cleaning as the performance; the end product of his process—the cleaned space—was his art. He recycled and reused all the materials found in the abandoned space, which became a recurring theme in much of his later work. In his second piece, *Myrtle Edwards Park Proposal* (1974), Simpson learned about the strictures of government regulations in terms of public space. He proposed a plan to the city of Seattle to reclaim the waterfront near Elliott Bay, called

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[34] Sidney Lawrence, Ned Rifkin, and Phyllis Rosenzweig, *Hirshhorn Works 89: Daniel Buren, Buster Simpson, Houston Conwill, Matt Mullican,* exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 25. Simpson's work was entitled *Face Plate.* He created a temporary site-specific installation in the fountain of the Sculpture Garden. Ned Rifkin interviewed Simpson for this exhibition catalogue on February 6, 1989.

Myrtle Edwards Park. Simpson's plan for Myrtle Edwards Park aimed to transform the rubble located on site into a park. The city, however, did not accept his proposal and instead overhauled the waterfront completely. Simpson deemed the city's clean, green park "superficial," as opposed to his proposed reclamation of the site. The experience was formative because he realized he could not fight the city hall alone; in large projects thereafter, Simpson often worked with a team. In the last work discussed in this chapter, he worked with planners and architects in order to create an installation that benefited the community. The *Viewland/Hoffman Substation* was commissioned by the Seattle Art Commission. Simpson, one of the three artists chosen for the project, worked directly with the architects, project planners, and the community in order to create an aesthetically pleasing energy substation in the middle of a residential neighborhood in Seattle. During the project, he learned to work effectively with both government bodies and patrons. An examination of this early period provides the basis for understanding Simpson's later community oriented and environmentally engaged works.

Simpson's Background: "Branded from the Beginning"

Simpson was raised in Frankenmuth, Michigan, a small farming community located between Saginaw and Flint comprised largely of German immigrant farmers. Living in an agricultural community and watching men plow, plant, and shape the land, he became "interested in natural systems being impacted by environmental intervention."[35] He witnessed the seasonal spring floods, caused by both the winter's snowmelt and because "everybody on the farmland had intervened with the natural tendency of the water to stand on the fields."[36] Contemporary agricultural practices

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[35] Bray Hayden and Justin Lowe, "Provocateur: A Conversation with Buster Simpson," *Column 5: Journal of Architecture* 16 (2002): 6.

[36] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

suppose that midwestern farmland should not have standing water during the spring planting or growing seasons because it prevents seeds such as corn from germinating and sprouting.[37] Thus, farmers add ditches and tile hills to drain fields and to expedite seasonal drying and the planting process.[38] Such drainage techniques also drastically change the natural water cycle. Tiled fields also cause large amounts of agricultural surface runoff, leading to polluted drinking water, hypoxia of downstream waters, and large-scale flooding.[39] When rivers are diked and dammed, only a finite area is available for the water to occupy, and, if the season produces more rain than the dike can hold, the river will flood.

Witnessing this intervention with nature affected Simpson and led to his commitment to environmental activism. “We’re branded from the beginning in a way,” Simpson says, recalling his childhood,

> I saw the carp going up the ditches instead of the streams in the springtime to spawn. I saw sugar beet factories accidentally having the levees break and the toxins from their operation occluding the river and killing the fish. I saw the slaughterhouse about ten buildings down from [my house] along the Cass River that would slaughter the cows and other animals to make sausage, and the blood would just go down the drain and you could go out and look at the red water in the Cass River.[40]

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[37] Lawrence O. Copeland and Miller B. McDonald, *Principles of Seed Science and Technology* (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2001), 76.

[38] J. Wesseling, "Drainage and Crop Production," in *Drainage for Agriculture*, ed. J. Van Schilfgaarde (Madison, WI: American Society of Agronomy, 1974), 7.

[39] J. L. Baker and H. P. Johnson, "Nitrate-Nitrogen in Tile Drainage as Affected by Fertilization," *Journal of Environmental Quality* 10 (1981): 519-22; A. G. Goolsby, W. A. Battaglin, B. T. Aulenbach, and R. P. Hooper, "Nitrogen Input to the Gulf of Mexico," *Journal of Environmental Quality* 30 (2001): 329-36; G. W. Randall and M. J. Goss, "Nitrate Losses to Surface Water through Subsurface Tile Drainage," in *Nitrogen in the Environment: Sources, Problems, and Management*, ed., R. F. Follett and J. L. Hatfield, 95-112 (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Elsevier Science Publishers, 2001); and D. L. Dinnes, D. L. Karlen, D. B. Jaynes, T. C. Kaspar, J. L. Hatfield, T. S. Colvin, and C. A. Cambardella, "Nitrogen Management Strategies to Reduce Nitrate Leaching in Tile-Drained Midwestern Soils," *Agronomy Journal* 94 (2002): 153-71.

[40] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

If the land is too heavily tiled, the river will flood. If the river is polluted by factories, the wildlife dies. This realization, early in his life, made a lasting impression. He later reflected, "my approach to social and environmental concerns stems from a belief that we should act in concert with the planet rather than assume we are the beneficiaries of all its riches. We are only one of its components, unique in our intelligence."[41]

Simpson also remembers doing science reports in junior high, which taught him about the social lives of animals and insects. "We saw movies about bees and how efficient their socialization was in their communities, it was about how collective efforts worked really well."[42] According to Simpson:

> I was very attuned to the reality of what the consequences of things were, whereas we are more insulated now. In most cases, we don't even experience these kinds of things. There is a disconnect between our actions and our consequences. You know, these kids are not going to defend the wilderness if there is no bonding.[43]

Education and experiences, he believes, are paramount in teaching both children and adults how to respect nature. Later, this conviction would inform his mature work.

Artistic Influences

Simpson's early love of the outdoors led him to join the Boy Scouts of America, where he funneled his appreciation for nature into creative projects. He became an Eagle Scout and then was invited to work as an instructor at a camp in New Mexico where he designed campsites and trail signs for five years (1961-66) during his high school and

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[41] Ned Rifkin, *Buster Simpson WORKS,* exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1989), n.p. Rifkin was chief-curator at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, from 1986 to 1991.

[42] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[43] Hayden and Lowe, 7.

college summer breaks.[44] His mature artwork reflects this early experience—his work brings nature to cities and provides a connection between humans and their land.[45]

After graduating from high school, Simpson attended near-by Flint Junior College. He did not enroll as an art student, nor did he initially enroll in art classes, for, as he claimed, "I didn't consider myself an artist for the longest time. I just liked making things. I made tree houses, I tinkered around a lot."[46] His instructors, however, saw his talents and encouraged him to apply to the University of Michigan. From 1963 to 1969, he attended the university in Ann Arbor, ultimately earning a Masters in Fine Arts, with a specialization in ceramics and sculpture.[47]

Attending the University of Michigan in the 1960s was very influential for Simpson. Across American in the 1960s, there was "a continuum of politics, literature, music, and personal expression all drawing from the same reservoir of utopian energy."[48] This energy was abundant in Ann Arbor. Although Ann Arbor was "kind of a little island out in the Midwest," many avant-garde artists and composers came through or were based in the university town, and they brought experimental energy to the campus.[49]

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[44] Ned Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle,* exh. cat. (Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum, 1983), 34.

[45] For a greater analysis of his later work, which provides a connection between people and their land in cities, see Chapter 4 in this dissertation.

[46] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[47] Matthew Kangas, *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object* (Seattle, WA, and New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 2006), 192.

[48] Gerald Howard, "Introduction," in *The Sixties: Art, Politics, and Media of Our Most Explosive Decade*, ed. Gerald Howard (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 26. Howard is currently the vice president and chief editor of Doubleday publishing house.

[49] Quote from personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009. See also, Richard S. James, "Once: Microcosm of the 1960s Musical and Multimedia Avant-Garde," *American Music* 5 (Winter 1987): 359-90. See page 360 for a good analysis of the town of Ann Arbor. James analyzes why this town of 100,000 people was able to attract avant-garde artists.

According to Richard James, the fairly conservative inhabitants of the Midwestern town did not necessarily embrace the avant-garde artists, but those who craved creativity were "all but forced . . . to unite, support each other, and initiate change."[50] Artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, Alan Kaprow, and Andy Warhol came through Ann Arbor.

One artistic group of avant-garde musicians, called The ONCE Group, began in Ann Arbor in 1961. The founders, however, eventually merged with other musicians, artists, filmmakers, and architects, and chronicled "the American avant-garde scene of that decade."[51] Their concerts included more than just music; the participants created performances and even "anti-musical" productions that garnering considerable attention. Ted Rancont claimed that "ONCE isn't music as the term is usually used and it isn't entertainment as the term is usually used. Last night's 'concert' was a great auditory purgative—a weird fun world of its own . . . . It's a whimsical, brutal world that has form but no reality, tastable color but no taste, space and time without relation . . . . As a new addict I'll be back among the [participants] more than ONCE."[52] The ONCE Group also featured John Cage and David Tudor, artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, as well as

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[50] James, 360.

[51] David Andrew, "Nothing Happens," *Michigan Daily,* February 28, 1964, E1. Quoted in James, 361.

[52] Ted Rancont, "Coins, Balloons and Explosions Play Roles in ONCE Festival," *Ann Arbor News,* February 29, 1964, E2. Quoted in James, 361.

experimental dance troupes.[53] The Judson Dance Theater, considered to be the founders of Postmodern dance, also performed at the ONCE Festival in 1965.[54]

Ann Arbor was also a meeting point for filmmakers. George Manupelli, then-professor of Art and Design at the University of Michigan, began the Ann Arbor Film Festival (AAFF) in 1963, which gained prominence quickly.[55] The AAFF is the second oldest film festival in the country and provided one of a few outlets at the time for experimental filmmakers to showcase their work.[56] Andy Warhol brought the Velvet Underground and Nico to the festival in 1966 to perform in person and for the screening of his films.[57] One 1966 film showing included Warhol's film *Sin.* Although by no

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[53] In 1963, Tudor and Cage performed with the ONCE Group and performed works by Robert Ashley, Robert Sheff, and John Cage, among others. Rauschenberg came in September 1965. See the essay in the booklet accompanying the compact disk, Leta E. Miller, "Once and Again: The Evolution of a Legendary Festival," Essay included with the box set, *Music from the Once Festival, 1961-1966* (New York: New World Records, 2003), 27.

[54] Composers included in the 1965 festival were Donald Scavarda, George Cacioppo, Robert Ashley, Gordon Mumma, George Brecht, Terry Jennings, Udo Kasemets, Mary Traltas, Barney Childs, Bruce Wise, Kazuo Fukushima, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Michael Adamis, Henri Pousseur, John Cage, Robert Sheff, Morton Feldman, Anton Webern, Joseph Byrd, George Crevoshay, Roger Reynolds, Lejaren Hiller, Pauline Oliveros, Herbert Brun, Benjamin Johnson, Charles Hamm, Salvatore Martirano, Christian Wolff, Philip Krumm, Bob James, Robert Pozar and Eric Dolphy. For more information, see Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: The Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 193.

[55] For a recent interview, see, Blake Goble, "Chatting with Ann Arbor Film Festival founder George Manupelli," *Michigan Daily,* March 29, 2009, A1.

[56] The oldest film festival in North American is the Columbus International Film and Video Festival. The Ann Arbor Film Festival, however, is considered the longest running film festival.

[57] The film's production included a half-hour introduction by Warhol, a performance by the Velvet Underground, and dancing by Nico and Gerard Malanga, Warhol's chief assistant and major influence. Warhol is quoted as saying, "In March we left for Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan . . . Ann Arbor was crazy. At least the Velvets were a smash. I'd sit on the steps in the lobby during intermissions and people from the local papers would interview me, ask about my movies, what we were trying to do. If they can take it for ten minutes, then we play it for fifteen. I'd explain. That's our policy—always leave them wanting less." Joe Ambrose, *Gimme Danger: The Story of Iggy Pop* (London: Omnibus, 2004), 24.

means appreciated by all, the artistic Ann Arbor community liked the film. A critic for *The Michigan Daily* wrote:

> For the first time since I have been writing for *The Daily* I find I have to review a performance in terms of explaining away the fact that although a large number of the audience walked out, and although about 90% of the remaining viewers were hostile to the show, the Warhol Velvet Underground's Exploding Plastic Inevitable was one of the finest "film-pieces" Ann Arbor has witnessed for a long time . . . [58]

Along with Warhol and his entourage, Yoko Ono, Gus Van Sant, and George Lucas all showcased their work at the Ann Arbor Film Festival in the 1960s.[59]

As both a witness and sporadic participant of these artistic collaborations, Simpson was able to break down barriers between fine and performative art. He specifically remembers the collaboration of creative minds: "There were dancers, composers, cinematographers, sculptors, visual artists, philosophers, all working together creating these performances or working on movies together."[60] Through these experiences, he learned lessons about how to create works outside of a museum that involve the community. Witnessing interdisciplinary collaboration paved the way for Simpson's public art career.

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[58] Andrew Lugg and Larry Kasdan, "Warhol's Drugtime Phase Brings Exploding Inevitable," *Michigan Daily,* November 4, 1967, A3. Quoted in Clinton Heylin, *All Yesterdays' Parties: The Velvet Underground in Print, 1966-1971* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2005), 47.

[59] The Grateful Dead, Fluxus, Merce Cunningham, Motown, and Claes Oldenburg also performed at the Ann Arbor Film Festival in the early years. Ambrose, 25. Also see Andy Taylor-Fabe and Ryan Blay, "Experimentation, Animation make for Memorable AAFF," *Michigan Daily,* September 25, 2009, A1.

[60] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

The Start of his Artistic Career: Woodstock and Pilchuck

Woodstock

The turning point in Simpson's work occurred shortly after graduation. In August 1969, Simpson was hired as one of ten artists to make utilitarian and aesthetic sculptures for a music festival—the famous Woodstock, held in Bethel, New York, from August 15 to 18, 1969.[61] As the Co-Director of Earthworks projects and workshops, one of his assigned projects for Woodstock was to create a jungle gym made from trees that had been killed by the then-rampant Dutch elm disease.[62] Simpson "reappropriated" the dead trees and used them to make a functional playground for concertgoers.[63] Because the concert brought unexpected masses—the artists created recreational areas for 100,000 people, but nearly four times that many attended—the playground's materials were reappropriated again and used for firewood and building material.[64] Simpson said he learned an unexpected but important lesson from his Woodstock experience:

> The big learning lesson for me was that all of what we did was eventually used for basic survival needs. As the festival went on, people tore up the wood structures we'd made for firewood. They used the hay for bedding. It put things into context for me. Public art gets re-appropriated by the public. People do what they need to do.[65]

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[61] For more information about the Woodstock Festival, see Robert Stephen Spitz, *Barefoot in Babylon: The Creation of the Woodstock Music Festival* (New York: Viking Press, 1979).

[62] Simpson enjoyed this job. As he explained to me, "We spent two months, paid hourly, had a budget, that was terrific. You got paid to make art, and come up with that art, whatever it was." Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[63] Simpson interviewed in, Lawrence, Rifkin, and Rosenzweig, 25.

[64] Ron Glowen, "Buster Simpson: An Activist Art of Urban Ecology," *Public Art Review* 17 (Spring-Summer 1990): 3. Also see Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle*, 34.

[65] Robin Updike, "Expanding the Canvas for Public Art—Agitator Buster Simpson's Works are Of the People, and For the People," *Seattle Times,* January 18, 1998, A2.

He realized early on that he desired to make functional art, not work that was just aesthetic. In an interview in 1983, Simpson claimed he was shocked to realize the relative worth of art in the real world; for the music-loving patrons at Woodstock, warmth and shelter were more important than aesthetics.[66] From that moment on, he vowed to make art with social value. "Agrarian art," or art that "responded to the rural nature of the site," became his mantra.[67] He brought this attitude with him to the west coast and later incorporated this functional approach into his urban work.

Pilchuck

After Woodstock, Simpson met Dale Chihuly at an artist residency at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 1970. Chihuly invited Simpson to help start an artist's residence program, which would be called Pilchuck, based in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains in Washington. As a RISD graduate, Chihuly taught at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine, after his 1968 graduation.[68] Chihuly wanted to create a similar school for glass making in his native state of Washington.[69]

With the financial help of Anne and John Hauberg, Chihuly founded his school.[70] Although Simpson had not worked directly with glass, he was intrigued with the possibilities:

> My eyes were opened to the potential of glass at the Rhode Island School of Design because of my background in ceramics. I

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[66] Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle,* 34.

[67] Lawrence, Rifkin, and Rosenzweig, 25.

[68] Patterson Sims, *Dale Chihuly: Installations, 1964-1992* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum, 1992), 33.

[69] Karen S. Chambers, "The Pilchuck Experience," *Craft International* 13 (January/March 1985): 35.

[70] Patricia Baillargeon, "Pilchuck Glass Center," *Pacific Search Magazine,* July/August 1976, 31.

> realized there were just as many gimmicks. But I looked at glass as a skin. I liked the phenomenon of its being heated, molded, and cooled. But I thought maybe I could take it a little further.[71]

Accepting Chihuly's invitation, Simpson drove his BMW motorcycle across the country and helped set up the school.[72]

Although hand-blown glass is not a new medium—some scholars date its beginnings to 3000 or 2000 BCE—the materials necessary in small-scale production of hand-blown glass were not commercially available until 1962.[73] Prior to this, artistic glass blowing was produced only through guilds or commercial enterprises.[74] Having access to this "new" material in the 1960s and 1970s made glass an attractive art form. Combined with a secluded and beautiful setting, the school became an important craft center.[75]

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[71] Matthew Kangas, "Glass as Element: 5 Artists," unpublished manuscript, 1981, republished as a chapter in Kangas, *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object,* 183.

[72] Tina Oldknow, *Pilchuck: A Glass School* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 65. This was the only source I could find with detailed information about the beginning of Pilchuck. Primarily, I have used Oldknow's interviews with the early participants at Pilchuck as well as interviews with Simpson.

[73] The year 1962 was when Harvey Littleton and Dominick Labino created a way to melt glass in a home studio. See Kangas, 40. Other scholars believe glass has been around prior to 8000 BCE, for glazes have been found on pots that date to this era. See Oldknow, 35, and Alan MacFarlande and Gerry Martin, *Glass: A World History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 10. Dutch and Polish glassmakers brought the art form to the new world in 1608. See Baillargeon, 31.

[74] In the first part of the twentieth century, numerous artists attempted to blow glass in their own studios, but did not succeed outside a factory setting until the 1960s. See Susanne K. Frantz, *Contemporary Glass: A World Survey from the Corning Museum of Glass* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 11.

[75] Surprisingly, even formalist art critic Clement Greenberg praised glass as an artistic medium in the 1980s. He claimed this because "abstractness has come to the rescue; abstractness as other than decoration. A sculpted work in glass that doesn't represent anything seen in Nature can escape the cluster of associations just mentioned. An abstract object in glass stands freer, has more of the autonomy that belongs to fine art." See Greenberg, "Glass as High Art," *Glass Art Society Journal* 4 (1984): 14-15.

Pilchuck's Ideology

When Simpson first arrived at Pilchuck in the summer of 1971, most of the buildings and the furnaces for the hot shop had already been built.[76] Although his expertise was not implemented in the physical building stages of Pilchuck, his ideas and philosophies helped shape the early programs of the school.

Simpson and Chihuly combined their ideas about how the school should be run, which shaped the artistic philosophy of Pilchuck.[77] At the end of the first summer, in August of 1971, Pilchuck had become "a comprehensive program, an Outward Bound of art, challenging mind and body."[78] According to Chihuly, "We were simply a group of people interested in blowing glass . . . We were all in it together and we learned about one another—about survival, about glass."[79]

After the August session ended, Chihuly and Simpson began to collaborate with Ruth Tamura, another glass artist, a glass student named James Carpenter, and patrons John and Ann Hauberg, planning for the following summer at Pilchuck.[80] Simpson and Chihuly returned to the East Coast, and lived in Chihuly's studio in Providence, Rhode Island, where they finalized plans for the upcoming year. They chose to keep glass the school's primary focus, but added other studio disciplines, including emerging media, which Simpson would be responsible for, as well as environmental living and structural

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[76] Oldknow, 65.

[77] Ibid., 66.

[78] Outward Bound is a nonprofit organization that teaches young adults self-sufficiency in the wilderness. Stephanie Miller, "Renaissance in Glass-Blowing," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer,* December 5, 1971, A9. Cited by Oldknow, 72.

[79] Ibid.

[80] The original ideas about establishing the center came from Chihuly, Ruth Tamura, and the Haubergs. See Martha Drexler Lynn, *American Studio Glass, 1960-1990* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2004), 65.

seminars.[81] During the winter, Chihuly and Simpson designed the school's first catalogue, which detailed the philosophy of Pilchuck.[82]

Due to the broad range of classes offered, the next summer's session attracted artists across disciplines who came to learn about art in general as well as how to blow glass.[83] Richard Posner later wrote that he came to Pilchuck because he assumed that "Pilchuck was going to be a cross between Outward Bound and Black Mountain College. And that one of its very deliberate intentions was to be a laboratory for, and an alternative to, traditional craft education."[84] Glass artist James Carpenter, recalled that the "environment was the primary emphasis . . . to be in an environment of nature . . . and respond to it."[85]

Chihuly claimed, however, that Pilchuck was *not* about large-scale glass production, despite the fact that glass sold well.[86] This concept bewildered some students, for in the 1970s, creating aesthetically pleasing glass objects by hand was an acceptable trade.[87] Peet Robinson, who came to Pilchuck as a student in 1971, explained his confusion about Pilchuck's philosophy:

> I'm oriented toward functional glass and pottery . . . and I didn't understand [the conceptual direction of Pilchuck] . . . We are not blowing glass just to make vessels, we are blowing glass to create art! . . . What I like is making functional glass and having people

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[81] Ibid., 74 and 80.

[82] Named the *Whole Earth Catalogue,* it included information about the school, which aimed to bring students from around the country to learn about glass. Oldknow, 76.

[83] Ibid., 83.

[84] Richard Posner, interview with Tina Oldknow, September 5, 1994. Ibid., 83.

[85] James Carpenter, interview with Tina Oldknow, August 10, 1994. Ibid.

[86] Ibid., 90.

[87] Ibid.

> buy it for a modest amount of money and use it every day. And it wasn't that that was being put down, but it wasn't explored.[88]

As Chihuly explained, "we were anti-production, no question about it. Between Buster and me . . . . we were not the place for production."[89]

Summer 1972: Art as Life

In the summer of 1972, Simpson, whose philosophy focused far more on artistic expression than on creating tangible goods, began documenting glass "events." One example was Simpson's documentation of Ruth Reichl's experiment of "cooking pancakes on glass."[90] The smooth surface of the hot glass was perfect for cooking pancakes. She cooked pancakes in this manner for the entire camp (fig. 2).[91] Simpson documented another glass "event" later that summer: Reichl making bacon and eggs on hot glass. He entitled the work *Video Hot Glass Breakfast.*[92] According to Reichl,

> Neither Buster or I would ever think of food as just an art project. I mean, it's food. There would be no point in doing it if you weren't going to eat it. It was the whole idea of art as about life . . . . to see every minute of your life as an expression of your art.[93]

This attitude was in line with Simpson's emerging commitment to the intersection of art and life.

Simpson and others also incorporated the art-as-life ideology into their housing construction. Ruth Tamura claimed Simpson's creative influence was "instrumental in

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[88] Interview with Tina Oldknow and Peet Robinson, August 30, 1994. Ibid.

[89] Interview with Tina Oldknow and Dale Chihuly, September 15, 1994. Ibid. Chihuly also included Erwin Eisch in this statement. Erwin Eisch is a German glass master.

[90] Ibid., 91.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Kangas, *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object,* 186.

[93] Interview with Tina Oldknow and Ruth Reichl, February 13, 1995. Oldknow, 91.

the recycling movement [at Pilchuck]."[94] In the early 1970s, Northern California's popular construction techniques included crafting eccentric homes completely of recycled materials.[95] Simpson used recycled materials in shelters for Pilchuck students. Apart from discussing with students how to build their own houses by using the landscape to create an "extension of their personality," Simpson built his own cabin on a large cedar stump, located on the edge of the meadow (fig. 3).[96] The eccentric tree house—complete with a Douglas Fir growing up through the middle—was an inspiration for architect Thomas Bosworth, who later designed many buildings at Pilchuck and received critical acclaim for his designs.[97]

In his non-sculptural work, Simpson continued to create videos with environmental themes. In 1972, he dragged a microphone across the forest floor. He filmed the moving microphone to record both the visual and the aural components of the performance.[98] Making the invisible visible, Simpson attempted to capture the full sensory experience of the forest. In another work, he filmed and photographed the creation and movement of hot glass at night; the images capture the glowing viscous

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[94] Interview with Tina Oldknow and Ruth Tamura, September 27, 1994. Ibid., 96.

[95] Ibid. Although the environmental building zeitgeist began in the 1970s, recycled building materials continue to be a good idea. See Paul Bierman-Lytle, "Commentary: Creating a Healthy Home: Environmental Building Materials: What are they? Where are they?" *Environmental Health Perspectives* 103 (September 1995): 67-70.

[96] Ibid., 95. Simpson stated in an interview: "It happened to have a Douglas fir growing up through the middle of it. And I kept that . . . it came up through the middle of the room. It was a very compact little house. It had windows all around . . . from the local dump . . . and a recycled, corrugated metal roof with a kind of flying roof off the back that provided shelter for cooking." Oldknow, 106.

[97] Kangas, *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object,* 193. Bosworth has received awards for design excellence from the AIA, from *Sunset Magazine,* and from the American Wood Council. See Erika Rosenfeld, *Building with Light in the Pacific Northwest: The Houses of Thomas L. Bosworth, Architect* (San Rafael, CA: Gordon Goff and Oscar Riera Ojeda, 2007), xiv.

[98] Oldknow, 106.

liquid contrasted against the dark background of night (figs. 4 and 5). He called these works "infra-red flash stills of 'drawings' with glass."[99]

Simpson's "infra-red flash stills" are similar to the kind of "Happenings" that Allan Kaprow and others were doing in the 1960s. Happenings, or performances meant to be viewed as art, paved the way for conceptual art. According to Kaprow, who developed and theorized Happenings, they consist of "pan-artistic phenomena, in which energies originally developing within the separate fields of painting, dance, music, poetry, ect., began to cross each other's paths at various and unexpected places."[100]

Along with Performance Art, Process Art, an artistic movement where the process of creating the work was more important than the end product, was also prominent during the late 1960s. In 1969 and 1970, Richard Serra created his "splash" pieces, which consisted of him throwing molten led into the corners of galleries (fig. 6).[101] Conceptual art also emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It de-emphasized the object and instead favored the artist's idea.[102] Joseph Kosuth, who created work such as *One and Three Chairs* (1965), explored the idea of objects instead focusing on of the production of them (fig. 7).[103] And video art, pioneered by Nam June Paik, who collaborated with

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[99] Kangas, *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object,* 187.

[100] Allan Kaprow, "On Happenings," *Tulane Drama Review* 10 (Summer 1966): 281.

[101] Richard Serra, *Writings, Interviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 138.

[102] Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2002). Also see Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1997).

[103] Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

the cellist Charlotte Moorman in the mid-1960s, was also emerging during this period (fig. 8).[104]

Related to all these artistic movements, Simpson's works focused on process and were captured on film. In the early 1970s, he "used glass as a route to meaning rather than as an end in itself."[105] In line with work by Kaprow, Serra, Kosuth, and Paik, Simpson's conceptual creations were on the cutting edge of artistic production.

Simpson's fundamental differences with Chihuly

In the summer of 1972, Chihuly and James Carpenter left for California to do glass blowing. In the interim, the school became aligned with the non-glass blowing traditions. According to Oldknow, "although Chihuly and Simpson had worked closely in developing the faculty for Pilchuck and the school's philosophy, it had become evident that two factions were developing. People who wanted to make Pilchuck a multidisciplinary art commune aligned themselves with Simpson, while Chihuly concentrated, with Carpenter, on glass. In addition, the tensions of living outdoors, of increasingly complicated social and personal relationships, of building, of being wet, of blowing glass—and of not blowing glass—were coming to a head."[106] Simpson and Chihuly's ideological differences could not be resolved. According to Chihuly, "a lot of people [were] trying to do communes, but we were probably the only ones trying to do a glass school. It could easily have turned into a commune and not been a glass school."[107]

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[104] See, Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video* (New York: Barrytown, 1998); and John G. Hanhardt, *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2000).

[105] Kangas, 185.

[106] Oldknow, 106

[107] Ibid., 107.

Simpson, however, desired to create a school similar to Black Mountain College and to provide a progressive environment for the avant-garde.[108]

Simpson's idea was to broaden the school's approach, instead of restricting the program to glassmaking. He said, "if [Pilchuck] becomes exclusive . . . that goes against the Black Mountain [idea]."[109] In the summer of 1973, however, the school's focus aligned with Chihuly's ideas instead of Simpson's. Pilchuck became an "important glass center—important in the ideas that are exchanged and in the glass that is made there."[110] Although Simpson's multimedia program was eliminated, he was still in charge of video and slide equipment; Chihuly increasingly cast Simpson as the school's documentarian and limited his use of video and film in a creative manner. In a letter asking for financial support, Chihuly wrote that "Buster's main job will be to document Pilchuck and keep video and slide records of all the people that work at Pilchuck, their work and ideas."[111]

By the end of 1973, "there was this big division," claimed Pilchuck student Toots Zynsky. "[Between] the glassblowers and the people who weren't necessarily blowing glass. [The glassblowers thought] . . . glass is a precious substance that shouldn't be wasted, it should just be made into beautiful objects and [the others thought] . . . we're

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[108] Ibid. Black Mountain College also had summer sessions from 1942 to 1953. Music, dance, performance, art education, among other classes, were taught. See Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

[109] Buster Simpson interview with Tina Oldknow, August 1, 1994. Oldknow 108.

[110] In hopes of gaining support from the Union of Independent Colleges of Art in 1973, Chihuly wrote Dean Tollefson a letter. See, Union of Independent Colleges of Art, November 16, 1972, Anne Gould Hauberg papers. In Oldknow, 107.

[111] Ibid., 109. Interestingly, of the many books published about Dale Chihuly, few mention Simpson, and the references are brief. In one example, Simpson is mentioned on one page as the photographer of an image documenting glass floats on Pilchuck Pond. The author does mention Simpson's philosophy in passing: "Such impromptu, site-specific projects set the tone of the first summers at Pilchuck and continued to push studio glass away from vessels and move toward experimental and conceptual work." See Sims, 40.

just here to learn and do and make and talk."[112] Simpson's desire to take the school down a conceptual path did not coincide with Chihuly's. As Oldknow observed, "although Simpson and Chihuly agreed on the kinds of people and approaches they wanted to bring to the school, Chihuly argued for more focus on the hot shop and getting work done, while Simpson wanted a greater awareness of environmental and social issues."[113] Simpson admitted to Oldknow, "it was becoming obvious that there were fundamental differences about the place, and given the nature of the personalities involved, there wasn't much room for collaboration."[114]

In defense of Simpson, Matthew Kangas, Seattle art critic, wrote an unpublished statement about Simpson's work in 1981:

> Buster Simpson's tenure at Pilchuck (1971-93) came to an abrupt end when patron and founder John Hauberg reportedly viewed the artist's *Hot Glass on Plate Glass* videotapes (done in collaboration with Mary Ann Zynsky) and summarily dismissed him. Those tapes occupy a place within the history of Northwest art akin to Duchamp's readymade snow shovels and urinals. They outraged, they influenced, they captured the medium's essentials in a new way and, in my opinion, they will one day appear as prophetic of a new way of thinking about glass.[115]

When Simpson left, the multimedia program ceased to exist, and experimental art left with him. According to Oldknow, "Pilchuck the school remained, but Pilchuck the commune was over."[116]

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[112] Interview with Tina Oldknow and Mary Ann (Toots) Zynsky, on June 2, 1994. Oldknow, 122.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Interview with Tina Oldknow and Buster Simpson, August 1, 1994. Ibid.

[115] Kangas, *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object,* 186. The videotape supposedly showed Simpson "laying crosses of hot molten glass on solid plates and allowing it to crack and shatter on the camera." See, George Heard Hamilton, "In Advance of Whose Broken Arm?" in *Marcel Duchamp in Perspective*, ed. Joseph Masheck (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 77-84; and Calvin Tompkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996).

[116] Oldknow, 124.

Art versus *craft* was an issue then, just as it continues to be today. Art critic John Perrault argues that "craft is art; rather, a kind of art. It may have a slightly different history and a slightly different context than painting and sculpture, . . . but it can be just as aesthetically challenging and, on some levels, just as rewarding."[117] Ironically, Simpson was punished for being too visionary, too avant-garde by turning glass into art during his tenure at Pilchuck.

Despite the loss of Simpson's experimental and creative influence, Pilchuck has remained an important institution. Since Simpson's departure, numerous well-respected artists have attended the school as Artists in Residence and Visiting Artists. In the 1990s alone, Steven Holl and Maya Lin came to make prints from glass plates, Ann Hamilton came as an installation artist, Lorna Simpson made photographs, Lynda Benglis, Nancy Graves, and Buzz Spector attended as sculptors, and Kiki Smith and Judy Pfaff created mixed-media work.[118] As Karen S. Chambers has noted, "[Pilchuck] has changed from a cult centered on one interest—hot glass—and one personality—Dale Chihuly—to an international communications center, drawing students, and faculty from around the world."[119] Although Chihuly continued to be associated with the school for many years, one can argue that Simpson's early influence on Pilchuck—through his environmental ideals and his conceptual ideas—continued to be felt as well.

Selective Disposal Project (1973)

After his time at Pilchuck, Simpson moved to Seattle in 1973.[120] In Seattle, he discovered a growing community of artists who were involved with alternative spaces,

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[117] John Perreault, "Preface," in *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object*, ed. Matthew Kangas (Seattle, WA, and New York City: Midmarch Arts Press, 2006), xi.

[118] Oldknow, 252.

[119] Chambers, 35.

[120] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

and who were receptive to collaborations, installation work, and performances.[121] Although Simpson was no longer in an outdoor setting, he continued to recycle in Seattle. He adopted an "anti-precious" way of conceptualizing his work: "I was getting stuff out of dumpsters, but not because I was a junk artist, but because why should I go to the hardware store when everything I can find is in the dumpster, probably." He also noted, "It always has served as a barometer of the affluence of the culture to look in the dumpster."[122] These thoughts and actions later influenced his mature work, which revolved around themes such as affluence and the price of affluence.

Simpson's first show that incorporated recycling—albeit recycling a space instead of an object—was called the *Selective Disposal Project* (1973). Simpson and fellow artist Chris Jonic removed the debris from the abandoned top floor loft in a building in Pioneer Square. Although the Polly Freidlander Gallery directly below was a beautiful—and fully occupied—space, the upper floor was in complete disrepair. As a performance piece, Simpson and Jonic lived in the abandoned space and conceptualized the cleaning of the space as a work of art (fig. 9). According to Simpson, in the process of cleaning, the two artists "tried to treat as much of it as possible as product, to actually give [the space] another life."[123] This guerrilla piece contained a highly conceptual element—the important aspect in the work was its *process*, not its *product*.

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[121] Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle,* 34.

[122] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009. He also noted in our interview that, years later, he still looks in dumpsters. During my interview with Simpson, he referred to the Charlie Chaplin episode of *City Lights,* in which Chaplin becomes the chauffeur of a billionaire. While driving this fancy car, and assuming a pretentious attitude, he turns the corner and notices a cigar butt on the sidewalk. Seeing the cigar at the same time as a local bum, Chaplin stops the car, jumps out, and grabs the cigar while the homeless man watches in disbelief. Noting their similarities, Simpson recollected this episode with a laugh.

[123] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

The cleaned space was also ephemeral and could be destroyed at a moment's notice. Thus, while squatting in the abandoned upstairs, Simpson and Jonic documented the gradual change in the aesthetics of the place. Their photographs, published as an artist's book, documented their time in the warehouse. Along side the images are typewritten captions describing the pictures. On the second page of the book, Simpson and Jonic included a description of the performance:

> Common labor @ $2.50 per hour, removing accumulation of remodeling and restoration projects dumped or stored on the 3rd and 4th floors (144,000 sq. ft.) 89 Yesler Way, Seattle Washington. The debris was presented and recorded. Salvage was offered to visitors and the dregs were destined for a landfill site, the Tulalip Indian Reservation. Paid time consisted of that time when a load was collected and hauled to the dumpster (four dumpsters were filled), selection time was all other. Occupancy was supported by a hot plate, icebox (converted industrial cooler) and burlap and polyethylene blankets. Input consisted of a power line and work lights, jugs of water, food, chain saw, hand tools, metal strapping, cinch and crimper, and cameras. Open 18th and 19th Labor process continues and recovered material offered for the taking. Special thanks Dave Cambell and Clare Conrad.[124]

Juxtaposed to the description is an image of a trashcan and broom (fig. 10). The broom is propped up against the wall. A sign nailed to the wall reads: "Please clear your own tables, Thank you, National Park Service." Included perhaps as an ironic jest, the sign beckons individuals to take care of his or her own trash.

The next page opens to the title page of the performance. The open-facing pages include a description of the performance's location: above Polly Friedlander Gallery, 89 Yesler, Seattle, Washington.[125] Juxtaposed to the text, there is a photocopy of a

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[124] Chris Jonic and Lewis Simpson, *Selective Disposal Project, December 4th-19th, 1973* (Seattle, WA: Artist's book, 1973), n. p. This photocopied book was made in a limited edition and published by Buster under his given name, Lewis.

[125] At this time, the Polly Friedlander Gallery was the top art dealer in Seattle. Her gallery closed in 1977 for financial reasons. See Regina Hackett, "Discredited Gallery Owner Struggles to Survive," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer,* October 7, 2004, A1.

photograph used as a postcard announcement (fig. 11). This image depicts the dust and debris of the neglected space.

In certain images, the artists made sculptures from the debris. They attached teacups to the ends of posts and propped them up with metal rods. Above one image, the caption reads: "the coffee rush and the cigarette high." Another page is entitled: "Pigeon drop and droppings." The image depicts a dead pigeon that has been moved to a dustpan. The shape of its body made a negative shape in the surrounding dust (fig. 12). On the opposite page, another photograph depicts the negative shape of a plywood board after it had been removed from the space (fig. 13). Both images are akin to the early work of Man Ray, who photographed the accumulation of dust on Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass*.[126] Similar to Simpson's photographs of pigeons and plywood, Man Ray's *Dust Breeding* (1920) documented a ghostly, yet beautiful image of forgotten space (fig. 14).[127]

The second to last page documents two images of the cleaned gallery (fig. 15). Sunlight streams in through the windows. The structural posts, which stretch from the floor to the ceiling, are straight and sturdy. The bottom image depicts the floorboards. Instead of being covered in dust and debris, they are clean and cleared. Simpson and

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[126] See Joseph Masheck, "Introduction," *Duchamp in Perspective,* ed. Joseph Masheck, (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 18; Dalia Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 66; Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde, and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 203; and Thomas Deane Tucker, *Derridada: Duchamp as Readymade Deconstruction* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 34.

[127] Kangas notes that this work was created shortly after Simpson left Pilchuck. Although peaceful, conceptual, and quiet, he notes that this work might have been "an angry response, in some ways, to the refined craft mania of Pilchuck . . . " See Kangas, *Craft and Concept: The Rematerialization of the Art Object,* 187.

Jonic reclaimed the space to draw attention to the process of cleaning. This early environmental performance paved the way for his later, more renowned works.[128]

Myrtle Edwards Park Proposal: Learning Lessons (1974)

Another early work that brought clarity to Simpson's later philosophy was a proposal for Myrtle Edwards Park in Seattle.[129] This proposal affirmed the importance and power of collaboration. In 1974, prior to the time when one percent of public construction funds were given to the purchase of art, Simpson proposed a project to redesign the space of the present day Myrtle Edwards Park.[130] Simpson was drawn to the unkempt waterfront, which is located along Elliott Bay; he would head down to the shore when he wanted a place that was "raw, ragged, and honest."[131] Although today the space has been transformed to include a sculpture park, bike paths, and walking trails, in the 1970s, it was previously Seattle's dumping ground for debris from the Interstate 5 construction project.[132] Simpson recalls that "all the big concrete footings and rubble, interesting big pieces of architecture were just dumped down there. It was a great hang-out, families would go and picnic on the big slabs of concrete, the homeless would hang out down there—it was a very in vogue space. [However, others] saw it as unsightly, they didn't see it as an honest gesture. To me, it was a very honest gesture, it was like an un-

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[128] In Chapter 3, I discuss Simpson's *Hudson River Purge* (1991), which was an environmental performance as well.

[129] Myrtle Edwards Park was previously called Elliott Bay Park. It was renamed Myrtle Edwards Park in 1976. I use its current name in this chapter.

[130] In my interview with Simpson, he said "this was about the same time that the Seattle Arts Commission, the Percent for Art coordinates was being drafted, but I didn't know anything about that."

[131] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[132] Ibid. Myrtle Edwards Park is right north of Pier 70 along the Alaskan Way waterfront corridor.

orchestrated Güell Park."[133] Like Antoni Gaudi, who used broken glass and recycled ceramics to create his mosaic-decorated Güell Park in Barcelona, Spain, Simpson wanted to use concrete slabs as ready-made sculpture (fig. 16).[134] In his words, he wanted to "re-orchestrate the rubble."[135] Although he presented his ideas to the Parks Department of Seattle, they dismissed them in order to "clean and green" the space. After spending $200,000 to "basically cover all the rubble with dirt and spread some grass seed around," city planners leveled out the landscape and dumped rock and gravel into the water for fish habitat.[136] According to Kangas, the space was "eventually mounded over by Jongejan/Gerrard Associates and finished off with Heizer's granite blocks."[137] Michael Heizer's *Adjacent, Against, and Upon* (1976), consisted of three boulders placed on

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[133] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009. Although Antoni Gaudi lived nearly a century before Simpson (Gaudi was born in 1852), they shared similar philosophies. As Gaudi stated in his writings that "the objective is to increase and accommodate the communications between the different points of the park, using only the materials found on site." In response to the building construction of Güell Park, Gaudi also said, "If the land had consisted of soil, a series of excavations and complimentary embankments would have been made, but this would have involved pulling up expanses of rock, so it was deemed preferable to pull up *only* the stone necessary to construct a number of viaducts, rather than to excavate the terrain and build stone embankments." These quotes were transcribed by I. Puig-Boada, *El Pensament de Gaudi: Comilacióde textos I comentaris* (Barcelona, Catalonia College of Architects, 1981), found in Maria Antonietta Crippa, ed., *Living Gaudí: The Architect's Complete Vision* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), 106.

[134] Gaudi's materials came from the local potteries. According to Robert Descharnes and Clovis Prévois, "these humble scraps were at the time both extremely economical, and the starting point for the spontaneous invention of a thousand arrangements made up of unexpected and always different materials and colors." Robert Descharnes and Clovis Prévois, *Gaudi: The Visionary* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 87. The same can be said for Simpson's reasoning about recycling.

[135] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Matthew Kangas, "Earthworks Revisited: From Smithson to Simpson," *Arts: Newsletter of the King County Arts Commission* 11 (October 1982): 6.

pedestals (fig. 17).[138] Ironically, the city replaced the concrete rubble with large rocks of similar shapes and sizes, and deemed them sculpture.

Simpson witnessed the city of Seattle change its urban waterfront into a space he deemed "superficial." Simpson believed the design went against the "core of what art is about." He proposed recycling the materials that lay in the space instead of clearing and cleaning the site and transforming it into something that did not stay true to its function. The waterfront also needed erosion control; Simpson's proposal included "a series of tide pools and sludge mounds" to handle rain runoff.[139] According to Simpson, instead of creating a site that was environmentally practical, the city created a "Pollyanna" park that was "idealized" and "not honest."[140] After witnessing a project driven by legislation instead of art, he realized that creating work that is both aesthetically pleasing and functional was "a team sport. I couldn't do it by myself."[141] This unrealized project proved that public art had to be made collaboratively not only by thinking of the public, but also by working within government strictures. Taking this necessity into account, his next project embraced collaborative planning and execution.

Viewland/Hoffman Substation Project (1976-79)

In the mid-1970s, the idea of having numerous artists working on one public project was surprisingly novel. Simpson helped pave the way for this approach. At this time, the art community in Seattle was open to new ideas. The city leaders of Seattle had founded the Seattle Arts Commission (SAC), a city government agency, in 1971. Two

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[138] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009. Also see Chapter 2 for an analysis of Heizer's *Adjacent, Against, Upon* in comparison to Simpson's sculptures in Seattle.

[139] Kangas, "Earthworks Revisited," 6.

[140] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[141] Ibid.

years later, this government-run organization first drafted and employed the Percent for Art program, which specified that one percent of capitol improvement funds from public monies must be put toward the purchase of art.[142] With this law, Seattle became responsible "for expanding experience with visual art—to better enable people in all society to better understand their communities and individual lives."[143]

The SAC is also notable for introducing the concept of a "design team" to public projects, which would include and incorporate the artist's ideas and suggestions in the planning stage of a project. A design team consists of architects, landscape architects, engineers, artists, and others. According to Norie Sato, who sat on the Seattle Arts Commission at this time, a design team "integrates 'art' thinking (or an artist's thinking process) with that of other design disciplines, an opportunity to make an artistic vision or idea the basis of the entire project."[144] Previously, artwork was only incorporated into the projects *after* the project was completed. Because the artists had no interaction with

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[142] The Seattle Arts Commission has now moved to the Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs. Barbara Goldstein, ed., *Public Art by the Book* (Seattle, WA: Americans for the Arts in association with University of Washington Press, 2005), 16. Goldstein, who was the public art director at the Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs from 1993 to 2004, added her critique to Seattle's current public art program: "Seattle's program is a little like the first desktop computer: it was a breakthrough when it was created, but newer models have surpassed its functionality. For example, Seattle's funding remains at the level of 1 percent of the city's capital improvement budget, and because the program does not restrict how the funds can be spent, the door is left open to questions about how much money will go to project management and how much to education costs and general overhead. This very openness has sometimes had the effect of restricting the funds available for artwork expenditures, especially during tight budget years." Goldstein, 17.

[143] Sheila Farr, "Is Public Art Disappearing?" *Seattle Times,* May 13, 2005, A2. One of the first Seattle Arts Commission projects was Anne Knight's nineteen commissioned hatchcovers for the city. The covers displayed an aerial street-view of Seattle, and contained the names of thirteen city landmarks. This commission brought in an artist who added art to a mundane object owned by the city. The design included the essence of Seattle: the bay, the streets, names of landmarks, and even a Chief Seattle emblem. See Diane Shamash and Steven Huss, eds., *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991).

[144] Norie Sato, "Design Teams: A Brief History," in *Public Art by the Book*, ed. Barbara Goldstein (Seattle, WA, and London: University of Washington Press, 2005), 120.

the builders, the works were often disconnected to the site and the community.[145] Instead of asking one artist to create work after a building was completed, the SAC encouraged architects and landscape planners to collaborate with artists to create work that was intricately connected to the space.

The idea of incorporating a design team first occurred during a conversation with the Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle City Light, the city's public electrical company.[146] In 1976, the electrical company needed an additional station in the Seattle Viewland neighborhood to accommodate the then-recent expansion.[147] Because the electrical company was city-owned, one percent of the expenditures went toward the purchase of art.

At the time, Seattle City Light's substation was the largest city project on the books. Because it garnered a large budget toward the purchase of art, this project "pointed toward a need for the public art program to address the involvement of artists in more prosaic building projects rather than gravitating toward conventional art locations

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[145] This idea of "plop art" will be further examined in Chapter 2. Richard Andrews, "Me Becomes We: Artists and Design Teams," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art*, ed. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 67. Another successful design team project occurred after the Seattle City Light project. In 1979, three artists were commissioned to collaborate with the architect to build the Weisner Building on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus. Thus the architect, I. M. Pei, and the artists, Kenneth Noland, Scott Burton, and Richard Fleischner, worked together to interweave the artists' work into the building. See also Steve Rosenthal, *Artists and Architects Collaborate: Designing the Wiesner Building* (Cambridge, MA: Committee on the Visual Arts, 1985).

[146] The substation received a Merit Award in the 1981 American Society of Landscape Architects annual professional awards program, because it represented an "outstanding collaboration of landscape architect, architect, and artist to integrate an electric power substation into a North Seattle neighborhood." Walter Rogers, *The Professional Practice of Landscape Architecture: A Complete Guide to Starting and Running Your Own Firm* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2007), 45.

[147] Sato, 119. Seattle City Light, the city's publicly owned utility company, provides energy for 350,000 customers and nearly 750,000 people. The 2006 statistics are posted at www.seattle.gov.

such as parks and building lobbies."[148] The City Light's engineer, Bob Bishop, suggested they bring artists and architects together to discuss how to add art to an unconventional industrial site.[149] As Tom Finkelpearl, director of New York's public art program from 1990 to 1996, noted, "Viewland/Hoffman was the sort of site seldom considered for public art in other cities, and as an electrical substation, there simply was no opportunity to work in the traditional manner. There was no plaza on which to place an artwork, no building to adorn with architectural detail."[150] Thus, the substation required a new approach to art making.

The Arts Commission sent out a call for artists and selected Simpson, Andrew Keating, and Sherry Markovitz as the "design team." The building of the Seattle City Light substation was the first time in Seattle's history that an architect invited artists to work along side the designer and the developer.[151] Simpson himself pointed out the novelty of this approach:

> In the past, if it was an architect taking someone to work with them, they would usually pick somebody that they were sympathetic with. This is good, but maybe not, because you don't have somebody pushing back. Because maybe the artist has never had that opportunity before, or the architect has never met this kind of art before.[152]

Simpson believes that creative ideas can come from group discourse, especially when people from different disciplines come to the discussion.

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[148] Andrews, 67.

[149] Norie Sato, a public artist, was serving on the commissioning board at the time and recalled Bishop's suggestion. See Sato, 119.

[150] Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 26. Finkelpearl has been the Executive Director of the Queens Museum of Art in New York City since 2002.

[151] The architect was Hobbs/Fukui, and the sponsor agency was Seattle City Light.

[152] Personal interview with Busters Simpson, June 26, 2009.

The final design consisted of a fenced area, which provides a path for the visitors to walk past an abstract mural and whimsical sculptures (fig. 18). Andrew Keating created a 400 foot-long mural, which not only provided a visual display of color and shape, it also mitigated the noise and blocked the unaesthetic aspects of the substation (fig. 19).[153] Instead of a plain, concrete barrier as a background, Keating's wall acted "as a backdrop interacting visually and thematically with the equipment and the whirligigs."[154] Twenty-seven "whirligigs" were created by an Eastern Washington couple, Emil and Veva Gehrke, whom the design team recommended. Made from found objects—hard hats, dustpans, hubcaps, and parts of washing machines—the recycled objects were painted in pastel colors, and positioned on poles. These objects turned and moved with the wind.[155]

A chair, created by Simpson, is positioned to face the mural and the whirligig garden (fig. 20). This chair is symbolic in nature, since one would not necessarily think of sitting down in the yard of an energy substation. But, the moving whirligigs, which are like spinning tops, entrance the viewer, making them stop and take notice. Simpson's chair, which is positioned right in front, is similar in design to an Adirondack chair, but is made of linked chain.[156] Trees, lawns, and other vegetation were also included so that the industrial space would become better integrated with the neighborhood. The design plan both helped disguise the uninteresting or unappealing aspects of the substation and brought attention to the unique visual characteristics of the equipment.[157]

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[153] Sherry Markovitz, the third artist on the design team, was considered the "Artist Consultant," and did not make any visual work.

[154] Shamash and Huss, 152.

[155] Sato, 120.

[156] Rupp, 242.

[157] Rogers, 45.

Analysis of the Design Team

Because a design team was included in the plans for the power station, the artists made sure that the community was a part of the planning. They canvassed the neighborhood and asked the public—the tax-paying funders of the substation—for ideas and suggestions.[158] They took the public into account as they formulated their plans—adding an open space for the neighborhood's children and creating sculptures to make the power station grounds more aesthetically pleasing. [159]

The success of the design team proved that inviting artists to the planning stages of a public project was a good idea, since they were good at conceptualizing the space as a whole. Instead of bringing in one artist after the building or project was completed, artists could add creative ideas from the very beginning:

> What the team did was change the process by which such projects had been developed and designed. Team members looked at the community in a way that was different from City Light's customary perspective, and they engaged the community in a way that was new. They considered not just architecture and place, but also the systems and functions of the substation, and they tried to make sense of them for the public. They looked at what art could be—at what kinds of art could both enhance the substation and inspire the public.[160]

In this case, an electrical substation—which the Seattle neighborhood previously resented—became a "focus of local community life."[161]

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[158] This project, however, faced many hurdles. According to Richard Andrews, the head of Seattle's Public Art program from 1978 to 1984, design teams present problems due to their often contradictory opinions. According to Andrews, "it was immediately clear (and this has proven true in subsequent design team projects) that although the artists and the designers spoke a common language of form and material, they were far apart in their understanding of how the individual creative process of art and design worked, let alone how they might be integrated into a real project." Andrews, 67.

[159] Updike, A2.

[160] Sato, 120.

[161] Finkelpearl, 27.

According to *Seattle Times*'s art critic Robin Updike, "in the realm of public art, the Viewland/Hoffman Substation is mythic, and is still applauded as a successful example of how artists can make practical improvements to civic life."[162] The Viewland/Hoffman substation thus became "the proving ground for an experiment that would change the way Seattle's public art program—and programs nationwide—worked."[163] Since its creation, it has won design and architectural awards and inspired the creation of other substations around the country.[164]

The strength of this project came from many creative minds and hands. Due to the complexity of the site and the space, Simpson could not have accomplished this project on his own. His communication ability and his willingness to work with the public helped establish a precedent of including design teams with public art projects throughout the nation. Since he was part of the first ever "design team," I would argue that his methods—thinking collaboratively, working directly with the community, and creating work appropriate for the site—have been influential for public art organizations and artists throughout the nation.

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[162] Updike, A2. Tom Finkelpearl also now claims the project to be "mythic." See Finkelpearl, 27. Other interactions between artists, architects, and landscape designers were Battery Park City Authority, which involved artists Scott Burton and Siah Armajani in 1983, and Jennifer Bartlett and Mary Miss also designed parts of the Batter Park landscape. For more information, see Kathy Halbreich, "Stretching the Terrain: Sketching Twenty Years of Public Art," in *Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places*, ed. Pam Korza (Amherst, MA: Arts Extension Service, 1988), 11.

[163] Farr, A2. Sato does make mention that "the design team process is just one option among many" and is "not for every artist." Sato, 124.

[164] The Creston-Nelson Electrical Substation in South Seattle, built in 1982, also contains art, as does the Canal Electrical Substation in Ballard, a neighborhood in Seattle, created in 1985. See Rupp, 242.

Conclusion

Simpson's early experiences—growing up in a rural town, attending graduate school at the University of Michigan, and serving as co-director at Pilchuck—helped shape his artistic career. The philosophy he honed during this time influenced his first projects. Three pieces from this early period were particularly important for his later mature work: *Selective Disposal Project* incorporated his early environmental ideals; the Myrtle Edwards Park Proposal taught Simpson that working individually is less effective than working in a team; and the Viewland/Hoffman Substation Project reinforced his growing regard for collaboration. As will be analyzed in later chapters, Simpson continued to use recycled material, to employ environmental ideas, and to collaborate with other artists and the community.

Figure 2: Ruth Reichl Cooking Pancakes on Glass, Pilchuck (1972). Tina Oldknow, *Pilchuck: A Glass School* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 91.

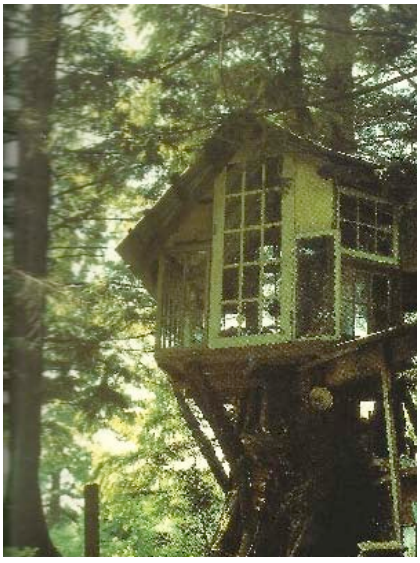

Figure 3: Buster Simpson's Stump House, Pilchuck (1972). Tina Oldknow, *Pilchuck: A Glass School* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 101.

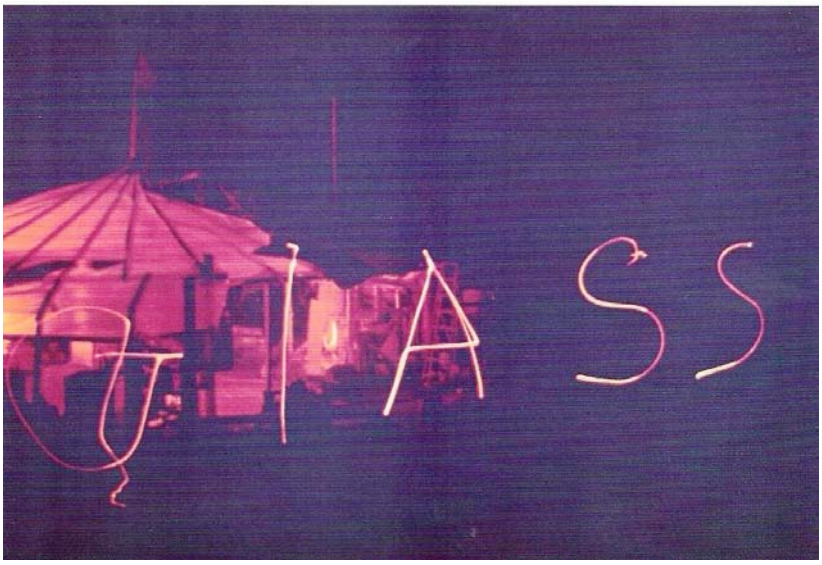

Figure 4: Buster Simpson's drawing with hot glass, (1972) Tina Oldknow, *Pilchuck: A Glass School* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 103.

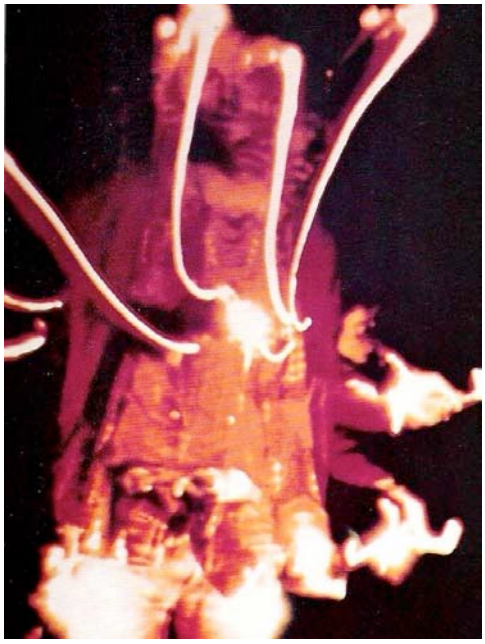

Figure 5: Buster Simpson's drawing with hot glass, (1972). Tina Oldknow, *Pilchuck: A Glass School* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 105.

Figure 6: Richard Serra throwing lead in the Leo Castelli Warehouse in 1969. Photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni.

Figure 7: Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs,* (1965). Sean Kelly Gallery, New York.

Figure 8: Nam June Paik, *T. V. Bra for Living Sculpture* (1976). Photograph property of Nam June Paik.

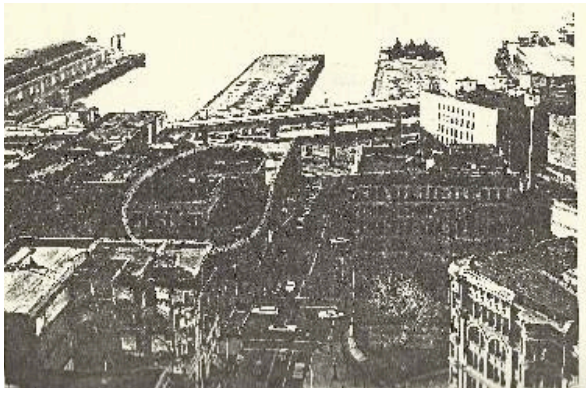

Figure 9: 89 Yelser Way, Seattle Washington. Chris Jonic and Lewis Simpson, *Selective Disposal Project, December 4th – 19th, 1973* (Seattle, WA: Artist's book, 1973).

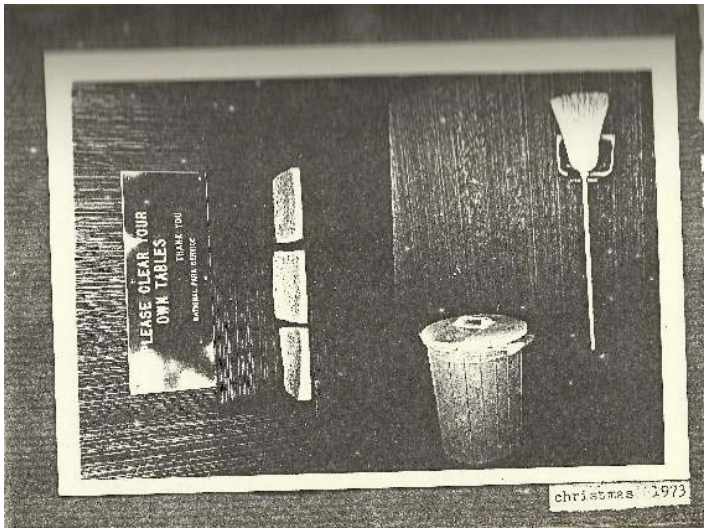

Figure 10: "Christmas, 1973." Chris Jonic and Lewis Simpson, *Selective Disposal Project, December 4th – 19th, 1973* (Seattle, WA: Artist's book, 1973).

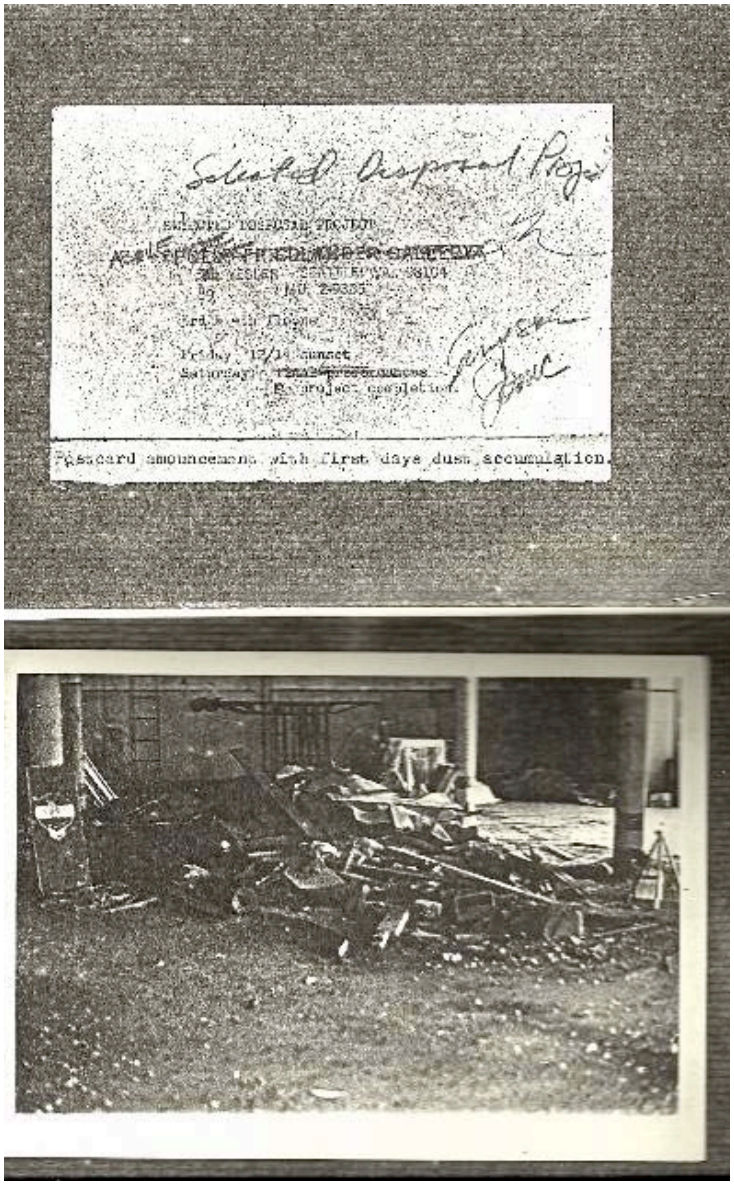

Figure 11: Title page. Chris Jonic and Lewis Simpson, *Selective Disposal Project, December 4th – 19th, 1973* (Seattle, WA: Artist's book, 1973).

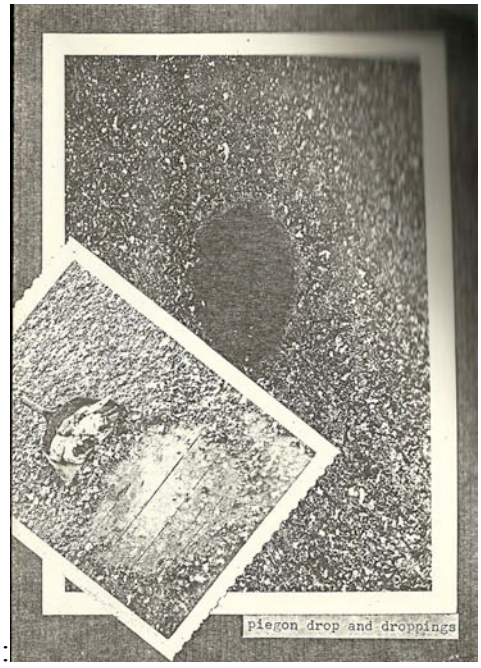

Figure 12: “Pigeon drop and droppings.” Chris Jonic and Lewis Simpson, *Selective Disposal Project, December 4th – 19th, 1973* (Seattle, WA: Artist’s book, 1973).

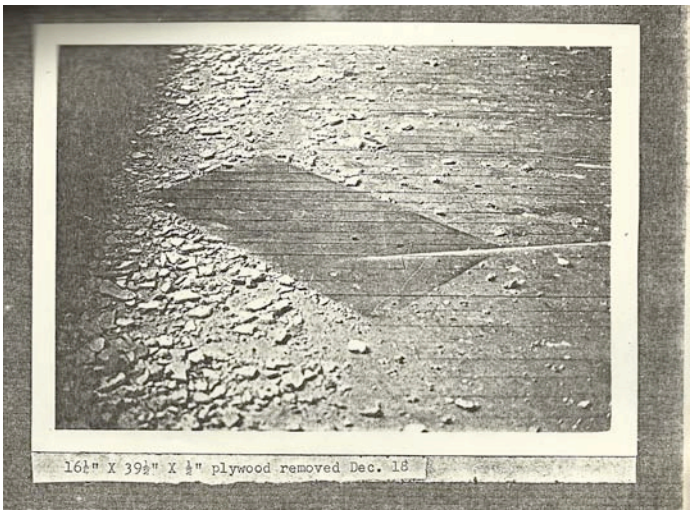

Figure 13: “16 ½ x 39 ½ x ½” plywood removed Dec. 18.” Chris Jonic and Lewis Simpson, *Selective Disposal Project, December 4th – 19th, 1973* (Seattle, WA: Artist’s book, 1973).

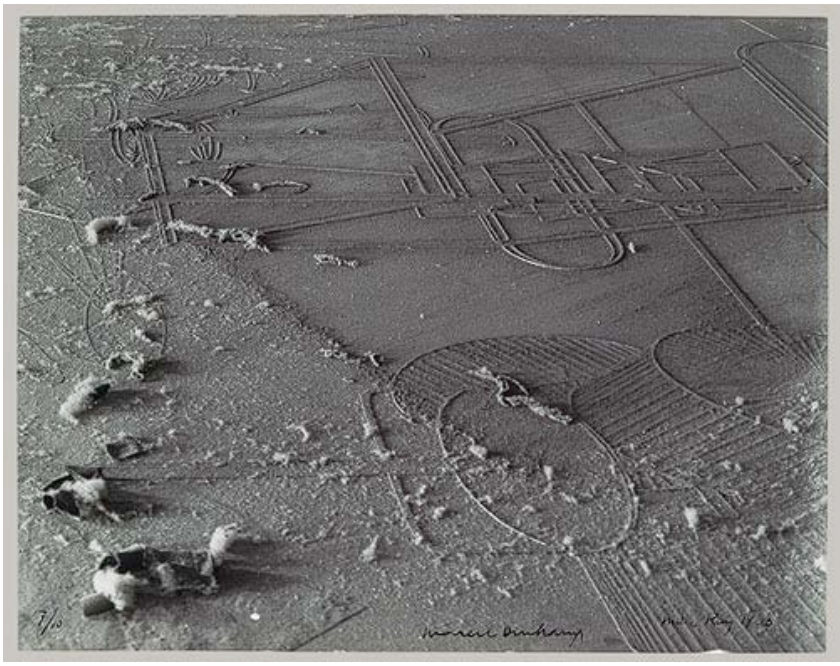

Figure 14: Man Ray, *Dust Breeding* (1920). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

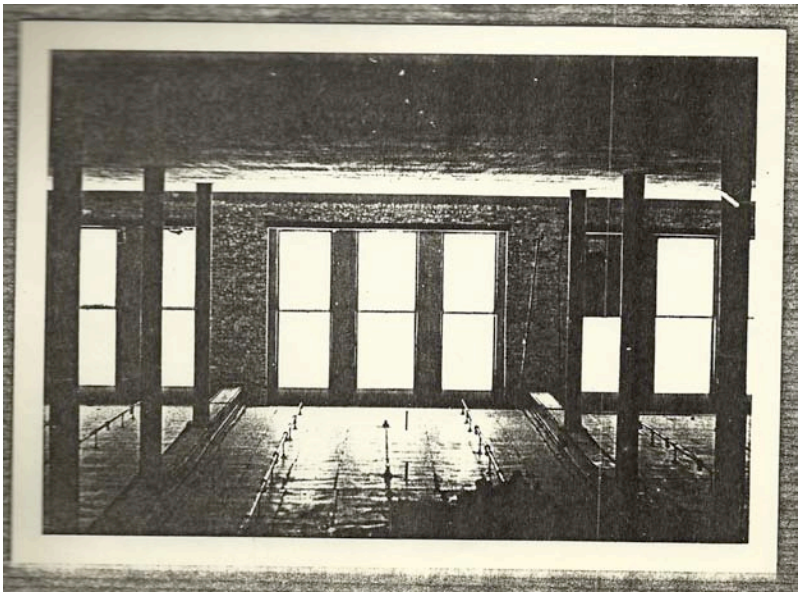

Figure 15: Cleaned gallery. Chris Jonic and Lewis Simpson, *Selective Disposal Project, December 4th – 19th, 1973* (Seattle, WA: Artist's book, 1973).

Figure 16: Antoni Gaudi, Güell Park, Barcelona, Spain (1900-1914).

Figure 17: Michael Heizer, *Adjacent, Against, Upon,* 1976. Seattle, Washington. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss, eds., *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 102.

Figure 18: Buster Simpson, Andrew Keating, and Sherry Markowitz, *Viewland/Hoffman Substation* (1976-79). Seattle, Washington. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss, eds., *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 101.

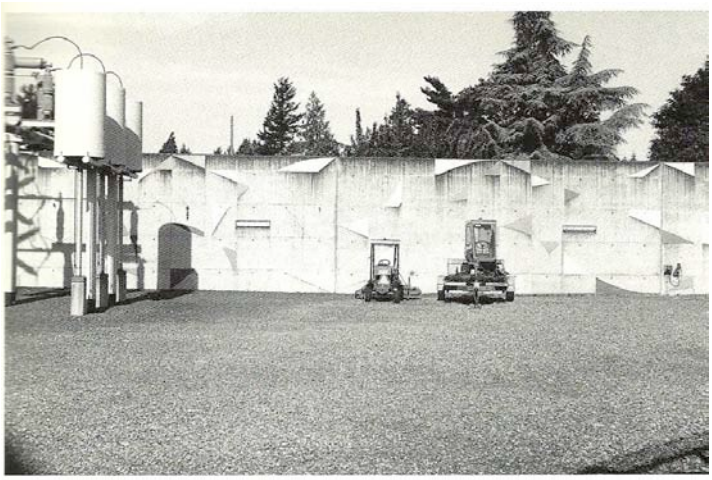

Figure 19: Andrew Keating, *Mural* (1976-79). Seattle, Washington. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss, eds., *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 102.

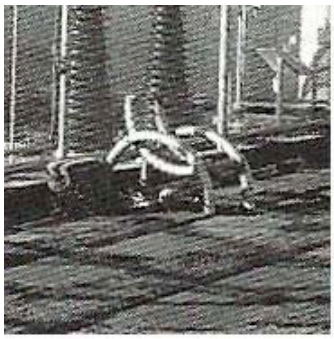

Figure 20: Buster Simpson, *Chair* (1976-79). Seattle, Washington. James M. Rupp, *Art in Seattle's Public Places: An Illustrated Guide* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1992), 242.

CHAPTER TWO: SIMPSON'S SPACE-SPECIFIC PUBLIC ART

In Seattle, two sculptures of rocks line two different sections of town. The installations are strikingly similar—both consist of large stones—but they are fundamentally different, despite both being funded by Seattle's one-percent for art program. In 1976, Michael Heizer created *Adjacent, Against, Upon* by placing a line of granite blocks on concrete pedestals in Myrtle Edwards Park (fig. 21). In 1983, Buster Simpson lined First Avenue with sandstone rocks that function as bus-stop benches for the citizens of the neighborhood (fig. 22). Heizer displayed his sculptures—positioned prominently on pedestals—as objects of art. Simpson displayed his as functional objects. Simpson claims that Heizer's "work is classical, self-contained, and although removed from the gallery space, [it] still relies primarily on that context of observing art."[165] "Heizer's work," he argues, "is an intellectual study of mass with gravity, mine was community intervention and social catalyst."[166]

Heizer's work is site-specific. It is created to exist in a certain place, as if it were "bound to the laws of physics."[167] Heizer intended Myrtle Edwards Park to function like a traditional gallery or museum—an aesthetically defined space with its encoded language of looking but not touching. Simpson's sculptures, on the other hand, function

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[165] Buster Simpson, letter to author, February 5, 2009.

[166] Ibid. In Simpson's letter, he notes other differences between his sculpture and Heizer's: "My stone was sandstone, 'ready-made' from the 'cull' yard (rejects) of an old historical quarry that had just gone out of business, his was specifically blasted out of the cascade granite formation and placed with three concrete pedestals."

[167] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 11. See Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis, eds., *The Practice of Public Art* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), for a recent compilation of essays regarding site-specific art. Included in this publication are sections on site-specific theory, practice, and lineage.

as integral elements in a public transportation system. Bus-stops, from Simpson's perspective, are more than a place to wait for a bus.[168] A street, specifically a bus-stop waiting area, is a neighborhood space that should be cared for and nurtured. Public spaces are used every day by many people. Because Simpson creates his work for a specific audience—the people in the First Avenue neighborhood of Seattle in this case—his work is more "space-specific" than "site-specific." A *site* can be defined as "the area or exact plot of ground on which anything is, has been, or is to be located,"[169] whereas *space* includes the "unlimited or incalculably great three-dimensional realm or expanse in which all material objects are located and all events occur."[170] Because the space of the object is now incorporated into the design, the function of the work can include aspects of social history, environmentalism, or urban renewal. This chapter examines how Simpson's space-specific public sculpture embodies more than just aesthetics; it connects the work to the people, and to the history and the time of a particular place.

Simpson clearly articulates the relationships that exist between his art and his politics: "My approach to social and environmental concerns stems from a belief that we should act in concert with the planet rather than assume we are the beneficiaries of all its riches."[171] Four examples of Simpson's public art demonstrate how he uses specific spaces and recycled materials to disclose the historical and environmental characteristics

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[168] Elizabeth Morton, "Art, History, and Public Space: Buster Simpson on Stewardship," *Carolina Planning* 15 (Spring 1989): 46. Morton compiled and edited this article, but all the words are Simpson's, taken from his Keynote Speech at the Preservation by Design Conference held in 1989.

[169] *Webster's Eleventh New Collegiate Dictionary,* s.v. "site."

[170] *Webster's Eleventh New Collegiate Dictionary,* s.v. "space."

[171] Ned Rifkin, *Buster Simpson WORKS,* exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1989), n.p. Published in conjunction with the exhibition "Hirshhorn WORKS" shown at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden from May 10 to July 23, 1989.

of a place. While his work fits into the history of public art, it exemplifies a shift from a site-specific to a space-specific approach. *First Avenue Streetscape Project* (1978-2000), *90 Pine Show* (1983), *Seattle George Washington* (1989), and *Walla Walla Campanile* (2005-2008), provide particularly good examples of Simpson's working method.

First Avenue Streetscape Project was a six-part project that spanned more than two decades. Installed along First Avenue in Seattle, the work promoted an environmental agenda for the neighborhood by encouraging people in the neighborhood to take ownership of and to care for their surroundings. *90 Pine Show* was a temporary installation set in the abandoned Pine Tree Tavern, a building that was slated for demolition. All the materials Simpson used to create the show were recycled, and the end project promoted the reuse of materials and the restoration of buildings. *Seattle George Washington* is a monument that juxtaposes the country's founder, George Washington, with the city's namesake, Chief Seattle. The large-scale work pays tribute to Native peoples while bringing to light Native traditions and land rights that have been obscured. *Walla Walla Campanile: Instrument Implement* is located in Walla Walla, Washington, and is positioned near the Water and Environmental Center and next to the confluence of two local creeks. The computerized bell tower reads water quality data and other environmental information collected from the two streams. The ringing bells announce the health of the water for the students and staff of Walla Walla Community College. By incorporating his works not only into the site, but also into the *space* of his environments, Simpson's public sculpture fosters an interconnection between the people and the land they inhabit.

The History of Public Art

Art in the public sphere is not a recent phenomenon; stained glass windows decorated Gothic cathedrals and frescos were painted in Renaissance churches. These works, however, were not considered *public* art, for fresco painters and stained glass

window makers were, in their day, often seen as artisans who were part of guilds, creating work derived from centuries of tradition.[172] The works created were not considered *public* art by today's standards, for often they were created only to satisfy a specific patron. The nineteenth century brought museums and public art collections. Ethnography and natural history museums were also created in order to educate the public about the world around them. Statues and memorials were commissioned for city squares, which provided a civic identity.[173] In the early twentieth century, modern museums brought art into the public realm, and although these museums were open to all, their structure required patrons to walk through the front doors in order to see the works. During the twentieth century, new technologies, such as films, television, magazines, and the internet, have made art available to a wide public.

Minimalism played a pivotal role in the history of public art during the last half of the twentieth-century.[174] Rosalind Krauss has suggested that public sculpture is something of a "rematerialization of art." Krauss's "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" proposed that contemporary sculpture is intertwined with landscape and architecture.[175]

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[172] Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 15. For information on Renaissance guilds, see Frederick Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting Sculpture, Architecture,* 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 32. For information on Medieval guilds, see Marilyn Stokstad, *Medieval Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 293.

[173] Tom Eccles, "Plop," in *Plop: Recent Projects of the Public Art Fund*, edited by Susan K. Freedman, et al. (London and New York: Merrell in association with Public Art Fund, 2004), 19.

[174] The Modernist response to Minimalism was outlined in Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," *Art International* 11 (April 1967): 19-21, and Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 12-23. In defense of the genre of Minimalism, see: Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Ann Arbor, MI.: UMI Research Press, 1990); Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum* 4 (February 1966): 42-44; Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," *Artforum* 5 (October 1966): 20-23; and Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part III," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 42-44.

[175] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October,* no. 8 (Spring 1979): 30.

She claimed that sculpture in the 1960s had left the museum and become "what was on or in front of a building that was not the building, or what was in the landscape that was not the landscape."[176] Because the focus was on the idea or on radical placement, art could leave the museum. Whether a site-specific work was placed inside a museum or outside in an open field, its success depended on its relationship to its site. As artists became increasingly independent from galleries and museums, they came to rely more and more on the public.

Albeit progressive, the minimalist aesthetic was not always favorably received by the public. For example, although Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* received rave reviews from the art critics, the public hated it. The 120-foot Cor-Ten steel arc was ultimately dismantled and removed from Federal Plaza in New York in 1989 (fig. 23).[177] Because the work was only visually connected to the site—the metal arc mimicked the lines in the concrete plaza—the public viewed it as a "hideous hulk of rusty scrap metal" and an "iron curtain" instead of a valued work of art.[178] The removal of the sculpture was seen

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[176] Ibid., 36. This theory is also applied in the work of both Earth artists and Eco-Artists. This will be further explained in Chapter Three. For more information see, Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002); Jeffrey Kastner, ed., *Land and Environmental Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2005); and Gilles A. Tiberghien, *Land Art* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995).

[177] Many scholars have discussed this controversy at length. Douglas Crimp, "Richard Serra: Sculpture Exceeded," *October,* no. 18 (Autumn 1981): 67-78, discusses the sculpture before its removal and analyzes *Tilted Arc* while looking at Serra's past oeuvre. Serra's own response to the removal of his work can be found in, Richard Serra, "Art and Censorship," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Spring 1991): 574-581. For a retrospective approach to the controversy, see Harriet Seine, "Richard Serra's 'Tilted Arc'*:* Art and Non-Art Issues," *Art Journal* 48 (Winter 1989): 298-302; Michael Kelly, "Public Art Controversy: The Serra and Lin Cases," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (Winter 1996): 15-22; and Gregg M. Horowitz, "Public Art/ Public Space: The Spectacle of the Tilted Arc Controversy," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (Winter 1996): 8-14.

[178] H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Photography,* 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 623. Despite this criticism, Serra defends the style of his work even before *Tilted Arc*'s completion in Richard Serra, *Richard Serra: Interviews, 1970-1980* (Yonkers, NY: Hudson River Museum, 1980).

as a "triumphal rejection of 'high art' by the people."[179] But not all public work created in the last four decades has been controversial.

Since the removal of *Tilted Arc,* art theory and literature has called for art that engaged the public, both in terms of community and conversation. In 1995, Suzanne Lacy coined the term *new genre public art,* which was "not meant to identify a form of art so much as to pose a challenge to a discourse developing around public art during the 1980s."[180] The term explored realms new to public art: installations, performance, civic art, and hinged upon the relationships the work had with its audience. French critic Nicolas Borriaud wrote of "relationship aesthetics," naming work that provoked conversation and collaboration.[181] Homi K. Bhabha wrote "Conversational Art," in response to an exhibition entitled *Conversations at the Castle* held at the 1996 Arts Festival of Atlanta.[182] Grant Kester's *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* also analyzed artists who create dialogue through their work.[183]

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[179] Kwon, 82. For responses in favor of Serra's *Tilted Arc,* see Richard Serra, "Art and Censorship," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Spring 1991), 574-581 and Douglas Crimp's interview with Tom Finkelpearl in Tom Finkelpearl, "Interview: Douglas Crimp on *Tilted Arc,*": in *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2000), 60-79.

[180] Suzanne Lacy, "Time in Place: New Genre Public Art a Decade Later," in *The Practice of Public Art,* ed. Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 18. This article is in response to her earlier publication of essays: Suzanne Lacy, ed. *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1995).

[181] Nicholas Bourriand, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, France: Les Presses du Reel, 2002).

[182] Homi K. Bhabha, "Conversational Art," in *Conversations at the Castle: Changing Audiences and Contemporary Art,* eds. Mary Jane Jacob and Michael Brenson (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1998), 38-49.

[183] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004). Also see Jane Rendell, "Space, Place, and Site in Critical Spatial Arts Practice," in *The Practice of Public Art,* ed. Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), for a listing of other influential articles and critics who wrote about public art.

In 2004, Miwon Kwon coined the term "site-oriented art," which includes a more

> intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life—a critique of culture that is inclusive of nonart spaces, nonart institutions, and nonart issues (blurring the division between art and nonart, in fact).[184]

This approach went against the institutional commodification of art. Instead, it addressed social concerns such as environmentalism, politics, racial and religious issues. The public works of Buster Simpson epitomize Kwon's "site-oriented" art. His installations engage social issues. Moreover, they take space into consideration, which includes the history of the site and the people who live in and around the site. By incorporating the public in the work, Simpson creates sculptures that embody the dynamism of a specific place.

Public Art

The "public," according to Marianne Doezema and June Hargrove, means "pertaining to the people of a country or locality."[185] Ironically, when one considers "public art," this definition of "public" is not necessarily reflected in the work of art. Artists have often created public art without any regard for the public. According to Lucy Lippard, to many people, public art means "looming Calders and mountainous Moores—cultural weapons with which to bludgeon 'improvement' into the unruly classes."[186] This definition of "public art" is demonstrated by the abstract shapes and garish colors that enliven many city parks and public squares. Because public art does not always

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[184] Kwon, 24.

[185] Marianne Doezema and June Hargrove, *The Public Monument and Its Audience* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1997), 5. A myriad of articles have been written about the challenges surrounding public art. See Arlene Raven, ed., *Art in the Public Interest* (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989); Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Malcolm Miles, *Art for Public Places: Critical Essays* (Winchester, Hampshire: Winchester School of Art Press, 1989); Harriet Seine and Sally Webster, "Editors' Statement: Critical Issues in Public Art," *Art Journal* 48 (Winter 1989): 287-89.

[186] Lucy Lippard, *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: Dutton, 1984), 75.

"pertain to the people," it is commonly referred to as "plop" art. Coined by architect James Wines, the term "plop art" refers to public sculpture that has no connection to its surroundings.[187]

Much of this kind of public work is large and costly. State dollars are used to fund such art for parks and college campuses. But instead of being connected to the people or place, "plop art" is often procured according to the unspecific guidelines of commissioning organizations. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) guidelines for the Art in Public Places (APP) submissions has changed over the years.[188] Begun in the mid-1960s, the initial goal of APP was to "give the public access to the best art of our time outside museum walls."[189] APP's aim, however, makes two assumptions. The first one is that everyone will agree on "quality." In other words, everyone will agree about what constituted the "best" art. The second is that everyone will agree that what is successful in the museum will also be successful on the streets. The only quality that was agreed upon was that the work chosen was distinctly "public." What made it "public" was its location—often an open and unrestricted area, such as a university campus, plaza, parking lot, or airport.[190] The central concern of this form of public art was where to

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[187] Eccles, 19. Joyce Kozloff provides an interesting defense for "plop" art. See, Joyce Kozloff, "From the Other Side: Public Artists on Public Art," *Art Journal* 48 (Winter 1989): 339.

[188] For an actual timeline of the history of public art policies and events, see Cameron Cartiere, Rosemary Shirley, and Shelly Willis, "A Timeline for the History of Public Art: The United Kingdom and the United States of America, 1900-2005," in *The Practice of Public Art,* ed. Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 231-46.

[189] Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 43. Although it was an honor to be a chosen artist for APP, the commission pay was not bad either. On average, the artist received $20,000-$150,000 for their work. This money was to be used for installation and material costs. The money came from the half of one percent of construction budgets for state buildings.

[190] Kwon, 60.

place the work to best show its aesthetic qualities. In many of the artists' designs, the ground still resembled a pedestal.[191]

In 1974, the AAP guidelines changed and called for commissioned work to be "appropriate for the actual site." In 1978, the rules changed again. Artists were to "approach creatively the wide range of possibilities for art in public situations." In 1983, grant recipients were required to make "plans for community involvement and dialogue" before their idea would be accepted. In the late 1980s, the guidelines mandated that the NEA itself "must not, under any circumstances, impose a single aesthetic standard or attempt to direct artistic content."[192] This rule continued into the 1990s, when grant submissions also included "educational activities which involve community involvement."[193] These successive changes demonstrated how community involvement came to be key to the approval of public art.

Seattle's Public Art Program

Seattle is notable for commissioning and implementing successful public art. Internationally known and recognized, the city's public art program has been a model for other cities. Seattle achieved this status by creating a "percent for art" program in 1973, which had an effect on public art at the local, county, and state level.[194] Seattle was one

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[191] Ibid., 63.

[192] Erika Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities* (Washington, DC, and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 51.

[193] Finkelpearl, 43.

[194] Diane Shamash, "Introduction to the City of Seattle's Public Art Program," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art,* eds. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 11. Because Seattle was one of the first cities to implement this protocol, city officials researched historical art appropriations throughout the United States and Europe. They specifically used the 1958 Washington State case of *Winkenwerder v. Yakima,* which gave cities in Washington State the authority to govern municipal activities. This allowed that activities—including city improvement expenditures—should be allocated one percent of capital improvement funds to be used for the purchase of art.

of four cities that passed the law requiring one percent of all construction budgets and bond issues to be put towards art.[195] The reason behind Seattle's initial success, according to Matthew Kangas, was that Seattle was a young city, and in the early 1970s, it attracted artists from around the country who brought ideas of hope, reform, and culture to the Northwest.[196] For nearly four decades, this policy has funded much of the public art that now stands in Seattle.[197]

Currently, the Seattle Arts Commission consists of fifteen policy makers—all volunteers—who are appointed by the mayor for two years. Their job is to advise the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs. The Public Art Advisory Committee also is allowed input; their team consists of seven members who are from the community or educated about art and design. This team meets twice a month to review the applicants for public work.[198] According to Seattle's Municipal Code Chapter 20.32, the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs is responsible for "developing a plan and guidelines to carry out the city's art program, including methods for selecting artists, artworks, and the placement of art."[199] According to Seattle's mission statement, however, the focus is on finding a visual identity for the city:

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[195] The three others are Baltimore, Honolulu, and Philadelphia. Matthew Kangas, "Art in Public Places: Seattle," in *Art in the Public Interest*, ed. Arlene Raven (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 306.

[196] Ibid., 304.

[197] T. Ellen Sollod, "Preface," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art,* ed. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 7. T. Ellen Sollod was the executive Director of the Seattle Arts Commission from 1989 to 1992.

[198] Barbara Goldstein, ed., *Public Art by the Book* (Seattle, WA: Americans for the Arts in association with University of Washington Press, 2005), 22. Barbara Goldstein is currently a public art director at the San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs. She has also served as a public art director in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs in Seattle from 1993 to 2004. This book is a well-researched and edited version of public art mission statements and offers suggestions on how to find and receive funding for cities.

[199] Ibid., 22.

> The mission of the program is to integrate artworks and the ideas of artists into a variety of public settings, with the objective of contributing to a sense of the city's identity.[200]

Because the board is made up of community members, appointed officials, and technical advisors, the work chosen is multifaceted. Instead of choosing work for its avant-garde or radical aesthetics, the primary goal of the Seattle Arts Commission is to choose work that will represent and enhance the city of Seattle.[201]

Many other cities have adopted similar mission statements for their public art programs. For example, Portland, Oregon's statement reads, "Dedication of a percentage of art advances the goals of the City by: Adding to the high urban design standards of the City; Attracting national media attention to the City because of the City's leadership in the area of public art . . . . "[202] As another example, the City of Kent, Washington, advocates public art for the following purposes: "To enhance the aesthetic nature and charm of the City of Kent for its citizens; to expand opportunities for citizens to experience art; to maintain orderly acquisition of art."[203] San Diego, California's mission statement reads: "The policy is intended to address a commitment to excellence in the design of San Diego's built environment, in the most efficient and cost-effective

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[200] Ibid., 22. The Artist Selection Process requires at least fifty-percent of the allotted funds to be given to artists who have a Pacific Northwest background and foci apparent in their work. A jury, who is appointed by the Public Art Advisory Committee and the Seattle Arts Commission staff, selects the work. The jury is advised by community members.

[201] Ned Rifkin, Undersecretary for Art at the Smithsonian, promoted Seattle's Public Art program: "Seattle is well known for its creative support of area artists as well as for its exemplary programs in public art . . . . The notion of bringing in nationally recognized and internationally accomplished artists, critics, and curators to review work, discuss it, and deliberates its relative qualities is something that is often taken for granted in many larger and more culturally prominent cities or wholly ignored in less affluent and more sparsely populated areas. Seattle has repeatedly demonstrated not only a responsiveness to contemporary artists, but a willingness to listen to the ideas spawned in studios." See Ned Rifkin, "Seattle: Building an Arts Legacy," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art,* ed. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 58.

[202] Goldstein, 25.

[203] Ibid., 45.

way and with minimal impact on existing procedures, practices, and capital improvement budgets."[204] Although only three different perspectives are noted here, they all emphasize the importance of choosing specific works of public art in order to foster a civic identity. Seattle's focus stresses "space-specificity", which has allowed the city to embrace the work of Simpson.

The First Avenue Streetscape Project

Simpson's focus of community integration in his public works fits Seattle's public art ordinance well. One of his first public commissions, the *First Avenue Project* was started in 1978. The work was located on First Avenue between Denny Way and Virginia Street. It comprised many inter-related works that related to one specific street. Over two decades, Simpson and others lined First Avenue's sidewalks with bus stop benches, connected neighborhoods with clotheslines, placed protection guards around trees, and cultivated an urban arboretum. Simpson viewed the *Streetscape Project* as a "work in progress, a laboratory for untried approaches and solutions to urban design."[205] He pursued his goals by reusing materials, planting vegetation, and incorporating references to the site's historic past.

History of First Avenue

First Avenue has changed over the years. Hotels, built in the late 1800s, once lined the street. Later, owners converted the hotels to single-resident apartments. Tenants, who were often lower-income people, used the near-by mass transit system. As time

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[204] Ibid., 49.

[205] Buster Simpson, "Perpendicular and Parallel Streetscape Stories," in *Belltown Paradise*, ed. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg, and Anthony Elms (Chicago: White Walls, 2004), 47. For further analysis, see Barbara Swift, "Portrait of Aesthetic Emotion," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art,* ed. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 72.

passed, the neighborhood, known as Belltown, became more populated and gentrified. In the 1980s, this historic area was demolished to make room for condominiums.[206] Despite the changes in the aesthetics and demographics of the neighborhood, Simpson optimistically said that the "experience of discovering an anomaly from the past juxtaposed with the present is the essence of the urban."[207] Attempting to keep Seattle's history in view, Simpson helped design a streetscape that would pay tribute to the city's past, restore the ecological infrastructure, and clean up the dilapidated neighborhood.

Beginning in 1978, Simpson, along with public artists Jack Mackie and Paul and Deborah Rhinehart, merged ideas to create an artistic streetscape for the Belltown neighborhood. The funding first came from the local city community and area merchants. In 1985, the city finally began funding the project. It then grew into a work that incorporated eleven bus stops and an urban arboretum.

Simpson's Studio: 2001 First Avenue

Between 1974 and 1987, Simpson's studio was housed in various locations around Seattle. For thirteen years, his studio faced First Avenue in the Belltown neighborhood.[208] Historic architecture surrounded his studio and a sixty-year-old Queen Anne fruiting cherry tree stood in the lawn. Working in the neighborhood, Simpson witnessed the gentrification and commercial erasure of the area's history and culture.[209]

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[206] Ibid., 48. For an analysis on Seattle's neighborhoods, see Anne Vernez Moudon, "The Neighborhoods," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art,* ed. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 41-47. For compilations on gentrification in cities, see Neil Smith and Peter Williams, eds., *Gentrification of the City* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Kenneth Kolson, *Big Plans: The Allure and Folly of Urban Design* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Ned Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[207] Simpson, 49.

[208] Ibid., 45.

[209] Ibid., 51. The Market Place Spa now stands where Simpson's studio once stood.

In 1979, despite activists' pleas, the city removed the cherry tree to make room for new development. A new condominium complex not only replaced the tree and the historic buildings, it also displaced people who made this neighborhood their home. Simpson claims that this tree was one of the first "witnesses" of the removal of nature and history from Belltown.[210]

The destruction of the living tree and the demolition of the neighborhood brought action from the community. Simpson says that "it was pointed out that preservation should include not only architecture, but also living things."[211] He was inspired to try to salvage what he could of Belltown's history and ecology.[212] Seen through his sculptures, the neighborhood's past and its new greenery bespeaks an urban renewal that can take place without gentrification or commercialization.

Shared Clothesline: Banners of Human Reoccupation

Adjacent to the Belltown neighborhood, in the Pike Place Market District along First Avenue, Simpson created a simple installation in 1978 consisting only of nine clotheslines strung along an alley (fig. 24). Simpson says that this installation was a way to dramatize "the resettlement of downtown."[213] He literally reconnected a neighborhood that had been transformed and disconnected. Simpson noticed how the young, urban professionals began to displace the starving artists and blue-collar workers who once lived in the neighborhood. To help mend the gap, Simpson rejoined the new and the old sections of Seattle's Public Market's Historical District. As Simpson claimed,

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[210] Ibid., 52.

[211] Ibid., 53.

[212] For an in-depth analysis of the historical and aesthetic history of Seattle, see James M. Rupp, *Art in Seattle's Public Places: An Illustrated Guide* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992).

[213] Morton, 44.

the installation was "a shared amenity between two different social/physical urban structures."[214]

During the late 1970s, the gentrification of Seattle was obvious. Developers built the Pike and Virginia condominium directly across from the antiquated Livingstone Baker low-income apartment complex. As with many neighborhoods, the disparate social classes were reflected in the facades of the buildings. The Livingston Baker Apartment was built in 1901, and had a historic, brick façade. The three-story building contained 106 one-bedroom and efficiency apartments. The Pike and Virginia Building, however, mimicked the highbrow designs of the mid-century Modernists.[215] The complex was constructed of glass boxes set inside a concrete frame. It was the first contemporary structure to be built in the neighborhood in fifty years. Because the two were jarringly different in architecture and residents, they sat like oil and water on the street.

Literally and symbolically, Simpson's installation connected the two buildings together with clotheslines.[216] His public art consisted of rope, decorated with canary-yellow laundry. It revealed a neighborhood in need of being reconnected. He chose clotheslines as a medium to suggest an environmentally friendly alternative to electric driers for both those who could afford appliances and those who could not. He said that "the clotheslines could be used by neighbors on either side of the alley to dry clothing, or I mused, a cup of sugar could traverse the gap."[217] Also, on windy days, the clotheslines

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[214] Lippard, 325.

[215] This building was designed by Jim Olsen and Rick Sunberg. The mid-century modernists, or "glass-box boys," as they were called, consisted of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson, and others. See Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style,* rev. ed. (1932; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

[216] Lippard, 325.

[217] Morton, 44. In an interview, Simpson did remark that one resident highly disliked the sculpture, for the clotheslines reminded him of growing up impoverished. "This surprise demonstrates the ease with which even well-intentioned efforts can fail to recognize the real feelings or needs of everyone in an urban environment." See Morton, 45.

functioned as an Aeolian harp. Simpson said that the blowing clothes on the lines created a sound reminiscent of wind blowing through pine trees.[218] More than just a pretty object, Simpson's work waved in the wind, exhorting the residents to come outside and meet. As the title suggests, the installation was created specifically for the people of the neighborhood: his clothesline was an amenity shared by two groups of people and two places.

The Bus Stop Project

In 1983, Simpson, and artists Jack Mackie, and Paul and Deborah Rhinehart, added trees and eleven sets of bus stop benches to the *First Avenue Streetscape Project* (fig. 25).[219] The benches in the *Bust Stop Project* consisted of large blocks of hewn sandstone. In order to make them cost effective, the team used sandstone from the Wilkeson Sandstone Quarry, located south of Seattle. This historic quarry has been in operation since 1886 and has provided stone for significant architecture around Washington State for over a century. The stones were chosen from the quarry's "boneyard"—the place where excess or misfit blocks were kept.[220] The leftover stone was perfect for the team's project. It too had a history. Among the blocks used were keystones and archways from the State Capitol Building removed after the 1949 earthquake and rejected stones from contemporary building projects. Because they left

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[218] Ibid. Also see Sue Spaid, *Ecoventions: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002).

[219] Diane Shamash and Steven Huss, "Project Profiles," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art,* ed. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 98. Although placing bus stop benches seems like an easy accomplishment, even these simple ideas encountered hurdles. Because the city would be responsible for replacing benches that were broken, they wanted work that was easily repaired. Also, because it was publicly funded, the team had to design benches that would expose the city to liability suits.

[220] The First Avenue benches cost around $200 per bench. As opposed to obtaining art from commercial galleries, working with the quarry made this public art affordable. Buster Simpson, letter to author, February 5, 2009.

the sandstone exactly as they found it, the shapes could also be seen as "ready-made" works of art.[221]

Because all the stones were of various sizes, the team created individualized installations instead of making all the benches identical to one another. One stone resembled a set of stairs. The team installed a "welcome mat" in front of the stone. The words set in concrete were to be read from the perspective of sitting on the bench. The mat beckons people out onto the street, as if one is coming out of the house. According to Simpson, "This effort is a suggestion to the residents of the recently-built condominiums along First Avenue to come out. Instead of welcoming people in, I am welcoming them out into the street."[222] Once outside, neighbors meet. After neighbors meet, connections are formed, and a community is built. Not only did this inclusion foster relationships between the neighborhood residents, it also gave ownership of the space to the people who use it every day.

The First Avenue Streetscape Project was inspired by Simpson's dissatisfaction with community development. During the early 1980s, he noticed that people who were moving from the suburbs back into the city did not grasp the concept of "urban-ness." He claimed many new residents feared the diversity and the closeness of urban living:

> It takes a long time to feel that an environment is your neighborhood, especially in an urban situation in which the public street is everybody's street. When someone buys a home, they know that their yard is their own, but when people move to a city environment, it is harder for them to feel that they are the custodians of their neighborhood . . . . I have tried to devise tactics to help that process along.[223]

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[221] Morton, 45.

[222] Ibid. Also see Jim Heynen, "First Avenue: Solid Benches, Fragile Trees," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art,* ed. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 27-29.

[223] Ibid., 44.

In order for the benches to be successfully used, however, Simpson and his team had to account for the weather. Because the stones were left open to the elements, they planted groves of plum trees around the benches to provide color and shade.

Simpson's *Bus Stop Project* is a successful attempt to cultivate community living, both in terms of people and plants.[224] The bus stop benches encouraged people to take public transportation, and public transportation is not only environmentally smart, but also conducive to building a sense of community. Neighbors can find themselves sitting on a bus stop bench together, or seated next to one another on the bus ride home. Conversations can occur. Riding the bus is far different than driving in the fast lane of the interstate in a car.

The Urban Arboretum

Along with planting plum trees around the bus-stop benches, Simpson and his team also planted trees along the length of First Avenue in order to expand the variety of tree species throughout the area. Although Seattle had many trees, few were indigenous.[225] Simpson points out that "America's urban street trees are more and more a monoculture of obedient vertical hybrids that keep out of our way and do not make a mess."[226] The team wanted to challenge the normal restrictions by taking a restorative approach.

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[224] During the 1990s, the benches became used by many vagrants. To dissuade those who used the benches for other purposed besides waiting for the bus, Simpson created a "butt guard" which made the bench temporarily unusable and also posted education signs explaining why the device was implemented. Aside from this minor mishap, Simpson claims the "benches are now an accepted part of the streetscape." Simpson, 50.

[225] Morton, 50.

[226] Ibid. Along with bringing indigenous species back to the streets of Seattle, urban trees also help air quality of cities. A study in Santiago, Chile, one of the most polluted cities in South America, proved that planting urban trees indeed helped air quality and was cost effective. Although this study included the data from all the trees in Santiago, which cannot be compared to Simpson's inclusion of trees along one street in Seattle, the study does find that trees improved the air in a city. See Francesco J. Escobedo, John E. Wagner, David J. Nowak, et al., "Analyzing

They re-introduced the cedar tree and added ginkgo flowering dogwoods, vine maples, and magnolias, which are all native to the Pacific Northwest. The trees did not need to be planted in a straight line, either. The only restriction was that a four-foot wide space required for handicap accessibility was to be placed around all sides of the tree.[227] Along with planting trees on one Arbor Day, the team gave away 200 seedlings with instructions on how to care for and plant the trees.[228] Suggestions for where the seedlings were to be planted included "no-man's land" such as corporate landscapes, office tower spaces, and suburban lawns.[229] Although their instructions were risky, the theme of the project was apparent: individuals of a community can make a difference in creating a greener environment.

Tree Guards

Although a green street is aesthetically pleasing and provides a healthy environment, it is also fragile. Because the city budget only allotted the team enough money for small trees, they had to come up with ideas about how to protect them.[230] According to Simpson, prior to this project, the city would just replace a tree that was damaged or broken. Simpson and his team, however, came up with ideas about how to protect the trees and, if damaged, about how to allow them to heal. Simpson created sculptures that surrounded an injured tree and protected it from further harm.

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the Cost Effectiveness of Santiago, Chile's Policy of Using Urban Forests to Improve Air Quality," *Journal of Environmental Management* 86 (January 2008): 148-57.

[227] Morton, 51.

[228] Ibid., 50.

[229] Ibid., 51.

[230] Shamash and Huss, 98.

Simpson's *Tree Guards* were related to works that he had been creating since the 1970s for the *First Avenue Streetscape Project* (fig. 26). First Avenue, in the 1970s, was different than it is today. Along the street were bars that catered to a rough clientele. One bar in particular, the Fore and Aft, even had a 6:00 a.m. happy hour. As the patrons left such establishments at all hours of the night and day, the trees along the street were often intentionally and unintentionally damaged.[231] The trees steadied inebriated pedestrians, and their branches often snapped under the weight. The city wanted to remove trees that were damaged by drunks, but Simpson and his team wanted to preserve them: "We argued that these deformed trees would grow to represent a living testimony to this time in Seattle's transitional history. We called this benign act, 'Urban Bonsai.'"[232] Bonsai, which in Japanese means "potted plant," represents the art of growing a tree in a contained area.[233] Simpson saw a parallel between trees exposed to harsh urban environments and trees that grow near timberlines and show visual deformities from the ruthless natural conditions of mountaintops.[234] Despite scars, both often survive.

To help the urban trees heal, Simpson created barriers around them. Some barriers were made from old crutches that created splints for the tree. This intervention was both symbolic and useful. The crutches were a visual reminder that, just like human bones, trees can break. Simpson points out that the crutches were sometimes used by those exiting the drinking establishments: "We found out that some people needed a crutch for their own assistance and removed it from the tree not knowing its intended function.

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[231] Simpson, 55.

[232] Ibid.

[233] For a historical look at bonsai trees, see Deborah R. Koreshoff, *Bonsai: Its Art, Science, History and Philosophy* (Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1984).

[234] Simpson, 56.

Eventually, with repeated reinstallations, the poetic utility of the crutch mending the limb was understood."[235]

Along with noting the fragility of the individual trees, Simpson's work draws attention to ecological vulnerability more generally. Vertical pipes were installed around the crutches, which functioned both as a physical support system, as well as a vertical detention watering system. The pipes were perforated towards the ends, which were buried in the soil. Rainwater would slowly accumulate in the pipe and gradually water the tree.[236] The crutches started as barriers, but when irrigation was later added, the installation suggested that an urban arboretum needs help to survive.

Along with crutches and pipes, bed frames were also used as *Tree Guards.* The bed frames functioned in two ways: they provided a support for the trees, and they made mention of First Avenue's historical past. The bed frames came from the abandoned hotels that once lined First Avenue. They were made of thin metal, and thus, were easy to bend. Because the bed frames were cheap, simple, and sturdy, they, like the crutches, could be used to protect the newly planted trees. As the hotels were slowly being demolished, and the condominiums were being put up in their place, the bed frames stood as symbols for a neighborhood in transition.[237]

For nearly ten years, until the late 1980s, the bed frames were called "relics." In one example, the metal frame was painted yellow in order to stand out from the visual noise of the street. Both parts of the frame were wrapped around the trunk of the tree.

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[235] Ibid., 55.

[236] Ibid. Simpson also included rainwater recycling in his *Growing Vine Street* project in Seattle and *King Street Gardens* in Alexandria, Virginia. See Chapter Four for more information on Simpson's work. See also Michael Hough, *Cities and Natural Process: A Basis for Sustainability,* 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), for information on how to create sustainable cities.

[237] Ibid.

The art almost resembles a cage, proclaiming to the people that they need to take precautions with regard to the living specimens on the street. But unlike cages that keep dangerous animals in, these sculptures kept people out. The tree grows up, and points its leaves to the sky. The bed frame cage does not prevent the tree from escaping; it protects the tree and enables it to grow.

Over the years, the bed frames rusted and began to deteriorate. Because of the hazards that rusty bed frames can cause, in 2000, they were removed and replaced with molds of bed frames cast in iron. Because they were a replacement and not the real historical bed frames from the hotels, the *Tree Guards* are now referred to as "artifacts."[238] The new *Tree Guards* look nearly identical to the originals.

Composting Commode

In order to help the trees grow and to assist with cleaning the street in the process, Simpson created creative commodes on First Avenue in 1987. These public johns, called *Composting Commodes,* were placed along the street as part of an activist solution to urban problems. During the late 1980s, some Seattle streets were being used by intoxicated or homeless residents for "indiscriminate street level defecation."[239] Simpson created an alternative to elimination of wastes on the streets; the *Composting Commode* provided a local management of waste. It consisted of a plastic, portable toilet that was

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[238] Ibid., 56.

[239] Ibid. See also David Thacher, "Order Maintenance Reconsidered," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 94 (Winter 2003): 381-414. This article analyzes enforcing policy by the police versus the community: "Contemporary scholarship often relies on a stylized view about the activities that constitute disorder, using broadly-defined behaviors like loitering, panhandling, public drinking and public urination. Even if public order is a desirable goal, it is reasonable to ask whether police are the right institution to enforce it. Some scholars have argued that the task of order maintenance should be assigned to community institutions and informal community groups rather than the police."

handicap accessible.[240] The commode sat over a future tree pit where the waste would naturally fertilize the soil.[241] Once the pit was full, the commode could be moved to another site along the street, and a tree could be planted in the newly fertilized place.

The sculpture was designed as a stoop toilet. An aeration system also expedited the process of composting. There was an interior railing that assisted with its use. Along with the railing, a twenty-foot long ventilation pipe served a functional purpose and provided an artistic addition. Due to the notch Simpson created in the top, the pipe also functioned as an "adjustable wind pipe organ."[242]

This idea, however, was difficult for the City of Seattle to accept. Simpson tried for three years to obtain a public permit in order to legally build his commodes along a public street. The public health and public works department labeled his project as a "potential health hazard" and an "offence to genteel sensibilities."[243] Although he never received the permit, Simpson went ahead and placed a commode along First Avenue. He chose a regular portable commode—a self-contained chemical toilet instead of a wooden outhouse—in order to make the structure blend into the urban fabric. Two weeks later, the city officials noticed the structure and removed it from the street.[244] Although the *Composting Commode* project was short-lived, the end product was successful—a tree now stands in the fertilized spot. The project also brought to light the shameless conditions of homeless people in cities and their lack of public facilities.[245]

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[240] Mira Engler, *Designing America's Waste Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 202.

[241] Simpson, 56.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Engler, 203.

[244] Ibid.

[245] Sue Spaid, *Ecoventions: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002), 75. In 2007, the World Health Organization estimated that 2.6

The success of the project did not end after the removal of the commode. A few years later, the commode was placed in a community garden next to an alternative public school.[246] The public outhouse was used as a tool to teach students about recycling and waste management.[247] Students could also learn about the importance of having public restrooms in cities. Restrooms, for many, are a space that is taken for granted. To keep cities and parks clean and sanitary, public restrooms are necessary. Simpson's creative work allowed for an alternative approach to street sanitation.

Even to the greenest of thinkers, curbside commodes might not be the most attractive sanitation solutions. But Simpson's *Composting Commode* success came not only from the project itself, but also from the discourse it engendered. As Simpson said, "It was more than a public toilet, it was a strategic aesthetic for a compassionate urban design."[248] This project attracted the University of Washington's architecture program. They conducted a week-long workshop held in downtown Seattle, which focused on issues raised by Simpson's *Composting Commode.*[249] The project was yet another work of art that created a conversation within the city.

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billion people are affected by the lack of toilet facilities, causing them to use buckets, streams, gutters, or rivers for relief. See "Lack of Toilets Has Impact on 2.6 Billion People," *BioCycle* 48 (November 2007): 8.

[246] Simpson, 57.

[247] Engler, 203.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Simpson, 57. In 1994, Simpson created an art proposal which was intended to provoke conversation about Vienna, Austria's sewage pollution in the Danube Canal. Although this project was never realized, Simpson's proposal entitled *A Dialogue along the Danube Canal,* consisted of placing a commode with exposed plumbing along the canal in order to provide a necessary service and make note of the lack of facilities. See Engler, 205.

The Queen Anne's Legacy

To commemorate Simpson's Queen Anne cherry tree, which once stood in his 2001 First Avenue yard, a new cherry tree was planted adjacent to the site in 1988.[250] Next to the tree, Simpson painted the story of the neighborhood and the loss of their historical tree on a nearby fence. It read: "This cherry tree commemorates the passing of one cherry tree and the saving of another in OUR neighborhood. Construction request[ed] removal of the tree. Watch for the re-rooting here in 1988. This tree is part of the First Avenue Urban Arboretum started in 1978."[251] Around the new tree, Simpson took branches from the old Queen Anne, and created a tree guard to replace the new sapling. The tree guard consisted of three branches, which, due to their wavy forms, suggested dancing people.[252] On the tops of the branches were plates that held birdseed. Thus, birds flocked to the little tree.

The planting not only symbolized the re-growth of the neighborhood, it also suggested the working relationship that Simpson and the neighborhood created with the city government. Before the *First Avenue Streetscape Project*, the city did not allow fruiting trees to be planted downtown due to the quantity of their dropped seeds. Thus, with the planting of the new Queen Anne cherry tree, Simpson saw this as a "subtle victory."[253] The cherries from the trees often are eaten by birds before they stain the street red. Nevertheless, the importance of planting a fruiting cherry tree was symbolic of the city's acknowledgment of history and as a renewal of nature in the neighborhood.

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[250] Ibid., 53.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid.

[253] Ibid.

90 Pine Show

Four years after the start of *First Avenue Streetscape Project,* Simpson embarked on another attempt at neighborhood renewal on Pine Street in Seattle. In 1983, he created an installation to draw attention to a condemned tavern's historical architecture. The building was slated for demolition. Between 1982 and 1983, Simpson rented the Pine Street Tavern—closed to the public—to create his work both inside and outside the space. Simpson wanted to draw public attention to yet another building in Seattle's historic district that was threatened by the encroaching new development. Not only did Simpson incorporate the site—the actual tavern—into his installation, he also used wind, water, and waste as a part of his work. By using recycled artifacts and appropriating historical details from the neighborhood, he drew attention to the site's significance, which promoted the reusing and recycling of architecture and artifacts.

The recycled artifacts Simpson chose to display were apparent even from the street—Simpson lined the roof with silhouettes made of sheet-metal. Weather vanes shaped like fish and crows perched on poles and moved with the wind on the roof. The crows were symbolic because they are notorious for being city scavengers. They also have the ability to make their nests from recycled materials.[254] These sculptures were symbolic because humans, too, can make "nests" from reused objects. Simpson placed stooping men on the roof as if they were to gather objects. These figures represented surveyors, grass-cutters, and wind-millers. For the surveyor decoy, Simpson used himself as the model.[255] He positioned the surveyor silhouette to "oversee" the crows and the entire neighborhood. Symbolically, the surveyor also watched as the old is destroyed to make room for the new.

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[254] Regina Hackett, "Simpson Uses Symbols to Teach His Moral Lessons," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer,* January 5, 1983, E3.

[255] Rifkin, n.p.

Adjacent to the Pine Street Tavern is Post Alley. Two separate works were installed here. One of these was an *Antacid Rain Drip-a-Thon,* which consisted of a clear, plastic downspout that funneled rainwater after a downpour. Instead of creating a rainspout as just an empty pipe that efficiently channels water into the sewer system, Simpson instead filled the spout with limestone rocks. Limestone is primarily composed of calcium, which is scientifically proven to "sweeten" the pH of the water.[256] Since precipitation in urban areas on the west coast contains high amounts of acid rain—especially in the densely inhabited Puget Sound region—Simpson's invention of limestone-lined rainspouts is a visual demonstration of environmental consciousness.[257] Although filling rainspouts around Seattle with limestone is impractical, the idea—especially as early as 1983—was a visual reminder of how each person in the neighborhood needs to do their part to recycle, reuse, and care for their space.

Also in the alleyway, directly north of the rainspout, stood a bottle recycling container, entitled *Crow Throw.* Because the site once contained the neighborhood saloon, vagabonds and intoxicated bums still used the alley as a place to throw their empty bottles. In an effort to clean up the space, Simpson designed a bottle trap with silhouettes of crows perched on the top. Instead of throwing the bottles on the ground,

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[256] See, C. A. Cravotta and M. K. Trahan, "Limestone Drains to Increase pH and Remove Dissolved Metals from Acidic Mine Drainage," *Applied Geochemistry* 14 (May 1999): 581-87. This article examines limestone-filled drains which are subject to acidic mine drainage. The limestone was found to dissolve metals in the water causing the water to become less acidic. For a more in-depth look at urban water usage see, Joel A. Tarr, "Water Supply and Wastewater Disposal in the United States," in *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History,* ed. Char Miller (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 74-75.

[257] Charles F. Powers and Danny L. Rambo, "The Occurrence of Acid Precipitation on the West Coast of the United States," *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* 1 (June 1981): 93-97. This article tracks Seattle's precipitation activity and its pH from 1972 to 1980. The pH of precipitation gathered in 1973 had an average of 4.9. This is compared to Pendleton, Oregon, a town of 16,354 (according to the 2000 census). The pH in Pendleton was significantly higher: 6.3. Although this article was published nearly three decades ago (at the time when Simpson was creating his installation), the population in the Seattle region and the West Coast has only increased, causing greater pollution and more acid rain to fall on the urban areas.

where they would smash into the street, Simpson encouraged bums to toss their bottles into barrels for recycling.[258] The throw could be aimed at one of the crows and, even if the throw did not hit the target, the bottle would land in the bin beneath.[259] Similar to the *Antacid Rain Drip-a-thon,* the *Crow Throw* promoted ecological awareness. Because the rainspouts and recycling barrels were quite conspicuous in the alleyway, this installation acknowledged the environmental connection to the site and took into account the way people actually used the space.

Moving from the exterior to the interior, the space inside the tavern contained an array of objects: a video monitor, silhouetted men, glowing salmon, and a bird's nest in the back corner. To begin the virtual tour, in place of the tavern's television, a video monitor was situated in the space. The video depicted the movement of the installation on a closed circuit channel.[260] The silhouetted men, positioned as crouching by the bar, were connected by a "drive shaft" that extended up through the roof. The drive shaft was connected to the aforementioned figures on the roof. Because the roof figures—the surveyor, grass-cutter, and wind-miller—all turn with the wind, this also turns the men positioned inside the tavern. This literal and figurative connection shows that inside and outside spaces can communicate despite the walls that separate them.

Next to the silhouetted men at the bar, Simpson created fish to hang in the front windows. Intentionally shaped to suggest the fishing that once dominated the city's economy, they also function as "lures" to entice the pedestrian to visually take in the installation from the street.[261] To make a visual connection to the waters surrounding the

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[258] Hackett, E3.

[259] Rifkin, n.p.

[260] Ibid.

[261] Ibid.

city, the fish also commemorate the local fish-market, which is adjacent to the tavern. Some fish had forks for fins, others were depicted as limping across the ground.[262] The fish were displayed in garish colors, drawing attention to their plight.

In the back of the tavern, Simpson hung a gigantic bird's nest. Made out of reinforcing rods, it had been created two years earlier and had hung in a large cherry tree that was also seated for removal due to its location. (The tree managed to escape the axe for two years due to Simpson's intervention, but was removed in 1980 due to its unfortunate location—it stood in the way of redevelopment.)[263] In the middle of the nest sat a crystal ball—a *memento mori* of the cut cherry tree and the inevitable future demise of the building.

Instead of new materials, everything Simpson used in this old tavern was recycled. His entire installation—both the inside and outside objects—were made from salvaged materials. Simpson transformed salmon-can lids into candleholders, and old springs were made to hold cans.[264] The men, the fish, the bird's nest were all made from scrap metal. Simpson's iconographic symbolism was ecological: it reminded the neighborhood to reuse what it did not need to throw away.

Despite the lure of the installation, however, the outside entrance was blocked by a chain-link fence and topped with broken bottles and saw-toothed blades. As Regina Hackett, one of Seattle's art critics, noted, the installation portrayed a "graphic urban inhospitability," for it juxtaposed the old historic architecture and artifacts with images

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[262] Hackett, E3.

[263] Ibid. The tree once stood on Pike Street, but was cut down for the building of the Pike Place North Condominiums.

[264] Ibid. Simpson went as far as even to recycle urine—the bathroom, called the "Patina Room," invited visitors to micturate on a string of copper fish. The chemical process of urine on copper does not allow the metal to oxidize, causing it to turn a bright blue. Pacific Northwest Native Americans knew of this process as well, and used it in their art.

that are harsh and uninviting.[265] Simpson's choice of where to install his work was far from the pristine white walls of a gallery. Instead, the walls were painted black. The work was a visual reminder of a place—a city landmark with a historical architecture—that was being destroyed.

Simpson worked on *90 Pine Show* for a year. The space was open to the public for three days.[266] In a newspaper article advertising the three-day show, Sue Ann Kendall writes that,

> Like photographer Eugene Atget, who captured the look of a disappearing Paris, or Walker Evans, who snatched accurate slices of life in his photos of urban America, Simpson imaginatively re-creates the look and feel of a market that is disappearing. A new kind of market is taking its place, one that will have its own sense of discovery in time. But Simpson's work makes us stop and take stock of what is happening.[267]

Simpson's work was not desperate nostalgia; instead, it was a visual demonstration that historic architecture and the history of the place should be contemplated before the site is demolished. Although this installation did not stop the wrecking ball, it helped to make Seattle more sensitive to the plight of its historic buildings.

Seattle George Monument

Simpson's 1989 public sculpture entitled *Seattle George Monument* also incorporates both space and time into its site (fig. 27). Instead of bearing witness to the landscape or historical architecture, like the two aforementioned installations, this sculpture juxtaposes a profile of the city's spiritual founder, Chief Seattle of the Squamish

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[265] Ibid.

[266] Sue Ann Kendall, "Artist's 'Tavern of the Mind' Will Give Way to Wrecking Ball," *Seattle Times,* January 9, 1983, E4.

[267] Ibid.

and Duwamish tribes with the profile of the nation's founder, George Washington.[268] Placed on Seattle's Washington State Convention Center's lawn, the sculpture is twenty-eight feet high and is positioned on tri-pod-like legs.[269] Underneath the two portraits, a skeleton of a Boeing 707 nose cone points toward the ground. The materials used in this work were also recycled.[270] The Boeing Company was, and still is, a large employer in the Seattle region; thus the company is integral to the local economy. By using recycled and natural materials, and by providing historical elements that are specific to the site, Simpson's work reminds viewers that Chief Seattle is the foundation upon which this modern city was built.

Chief Seattle's portrait fans out in twenty-four segments, creating a three-dimensional trellis. Ivy grows over the trellis, filling in the profile of the Native American chief. Simultaneously, as the ivy grows, the sharpened template of George Washington functions as a wind vane and turns in a complete circle around the sculpture. As the wind vane revolves, the blade of George Washington's face trims the ivy to the shape of Seattle's profile. Simpson's sculpture is an artistic attempt to show the past assimilation of Chief Seattle's land and people into modern America.

Two additional references to Seattle's historical past are sandblasted into the plaza's pavement. The north and south axis of the walkway has a reproduction of the first survey map connecting Seattle to the national survey plan. The east and west axis

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[268] Chief Seattle's name has many translations, including Chief Sealth. I chose to use "Seattle" in the body of this chapter to connect the name of the site and the title of the work.

[269] This was one of five public art projects purchased from the funds for Seattle's Convention Center. The artists were chosen by a special selection committee consisting of David Rutherford, Phyllis Lamphere, Mary Jane Jacobs, and Douglas Hollis. The other four artists chosen were David Mahler, Jackie Ferrara, Jenny Holzer, and Guy Anderson. See James M. Rupp, *Art in Seattle's Public Places: An Illustrated Guide* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 75.

[270] Robin Updike, "Expanding the Canvas for Public Art—Agitator Buster Simpson's Works Are of the People and for the People," *Seattle Times,* January 18, 1998, E5.

contains a portion of Chief Seattle's speech given at the signing of the 1855 treaty, which ceded 6.4 million acres of land to the white man.[271] Although its accuracy is now in question[272]—Henry Smith recorded the speech in a Seattle newspaper thirty years after Chief Seattle spoke—the words ring true nevertheless:

> At night when the streets of your cities and villages
> will be silent
> and you think them deserted,
> they will throng with the returning hosts
> that once filled and still
> love this beautiful land.
> The white man will never be alone.
> Let him be just
> and deal kindly with my people
> for the dead are not powerless.
> Dead did I say?
> There is no death.
> Only the change of worlds.[273]

James Wehn's Chief Seattle Sculptures

Simpson's contemporary sculpture stands in stark contrast to two earlier sculptures of Chief Seattle created by Seattle's first public sculptor, James Wehn. *Bust of Chief Seattle* and *Chief Seattle* were dedicated in 1909 and 1912 respectively (figs. 28

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[271] The 1855 treaty did reserve the rights for the tribes of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes to use the land for fishing, hunting, and medicinal gathering. "Treaty Between the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes Acting in Confederation and the United States, 1859," *United States Statutes at Large,*12: 945.

[272] Simpson quoted Chief Seattle from Henry A. Smith's account that was published in 1887 and republished in Henry A. Smith, "Address by Chief Seattle," *Hudson Review* 23 (Autumn 1970): 492-494. Recent research has shown Chief Seattle's speech to be a "fake." See Garrett Hardin, "The Gospel of Chief Seattle Is a Hoax," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (Fall 1989): 195-96 and Albert Furtwangler, *Answering Chief Seattle* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

[273] A copy of the entire speech can be found both in English and back translated into the traditional Lushootseed (Puget Sound) language in, Vi Hilbert, "When Chief Seattle Spoke," *A Time of Gathering: Native Heritage in Washington State,* ed. Robin K. Wright (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1991), 262-66.

and 29). Created nearly a century before Simpson's works, these two sculptures can be contrasted with Simpson's work. Wehn's representational portraits of Chief Seattle do not deal with the assimilation of the Native American peoples as does Simpson's sculpture.

James Wehn was Seattle's pioneer sculptor. Born in Indianapolis, he moved to the West Coast in 1889 at the age of seven with his family. He learned to sculpt as an apprentice, and first began creating works that were seen in architectural ornamentation for his father's company, the Salmon Bay Brass and Iron Foundry.[274] During his sculpting career, he created numerous statues of Chief Seattle. The two that are the most famous are his *Bust of Chief Seattle,* positioned in Pioneer Square, and the *Chief Seattle* in Tilikum Place.

In 1908, Seattle commissioned the bust. The city was making aesthetic improvements for the up-coming Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, which was to be held in 1909. The city wanted an ornamental water fountain to commemorate the occasion.[275] This was the first sculpture of Chief Seattle to be placed in the city. The sculpture is made of bronze. The base of the sculpture is a water basin. It once was used by horses and dogs.[276] The exterior of the basin depicts cattails and other water plants in high relief. Both the sculpture and basin are raised on platforms that consist of jagged rock-like shapes. The bust of the chief is perched at the top of the rock and his name is written across his torso. This image of Chief Seattle's head was taken from the full-scale sculpture of the Chief that Wehn was also working on at the time. In order to create a

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[274] James M. Rupp, *Art in Seattle's Public Places: An Illustrated Guide* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992), 309.

[275] Ibid., 21.

[276] Ibid.

semi-accurate likeness, Wehn used the only photograph taken of the chief in 1864 (fig. 30).

Wehn's other sculpture, *Chief Seattle*, positioned in Tilikum Place near Fifth Avenue and Denny Street, was dedicated in 1912. This sculpture is a full-figure statue of Chief Seattle. The Native American's arm is outstretched recalling the gesture of an orator. The base is a large block of granite. On the base, two bear heads serve as waterspouts on the north and south axis, and two relief plaques are placed on the others. One plaque includes a salmon-flanked inscription that reads:

> Seattle
> Chief of the Squamish
> A firm friend of the whites
> For him the city of Seattle
> Was named by its founders.

The other plaque depicts Chief Kitsap, Chief of the Suquamish peoples before Chief Seattle. He is shown watching the arrival of Captain George Vancouver's ship in Puget Sound in 1792. This sculpture, located in Seattle's Tilikum Place, was the historical site that was claimed by three of Seattle's white pioneers: Carson Boren, William Bell, and Arthur Denny.[277] Despite the fact that the land was overrun by white men, the name of the site, "Tilikum," is translated from a Chinnok word that means "everyone."[278] Ironically, "everyone" has all too often excluded the Native Americans who originally "owned" Seattle's land.

Simpson's sculpture is more empathetic to and inclusive of the space as a whole than Wehn's. It encompasses a complex history. Instead of simply portraying the white man's perspective, it includes another side of the story. Simpson's work is *space*-specific

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[277] Ibid., 104.

[278] Ibid. Chinnok Jargon is a trade language which consisted of a mix of Native American and European languages.

as well as site-specific in that it alludes to the history of native peoples and to the original landscapes of the area.

Of course, in the early decades of the twentieth century, issues of land ownership and issues of recycling were not part of daily conversation or life. But by the end of the century, commemorating historical figures had become more complex. Because these works all stand in prominent places in Seattle—outside the protective walls of a museum—Simpson's contemporary approach to Seattle's history is an appropriate addition to the otherwise antiquated tradition of portraying Chief Seattle. Although one could argue that Wehn, too, incorporated a historical aspect, he did so from a singular perspective. To his credit, Wehn created sculptures that commemorated Chief Seattle in a respectful fashion. But he did not acknowledge the loss of Chief Seattle's indigenous culture. Simpson's sculpture, by comparison, used recycled material and live vegetation to visually remind viewers that the space, the place, and the people were growing and changing things. Instead of making the work simply site-specific, Simpson takes a number of complex issues into account. His installation pays heed to the Native Americans who first inhabited the land and makes reference to the white man who overtook it. Although George Washington was not directly connected to the assimilation of Seattle's Native peoples and their land, his profile symbolizes the whirlwind of change that befell the West. Although Seattle's fate cannot be reversed, Simpson's *Seattle George Monument* reminds us of some of the things that were lost.

Instrument Implement: Walla Walla Campanile

Simpson's *Seattle George Monument* involves the past. Time is also involved in his projects that worked toward protecting the ecological health of the land. Simpson's *Instrument Implement: Walla Walla Campanile* warns the community of Walla Walla, Washington, about environmental hazards in their local rivers. Instead of containing

church bells, Simpson's tower is made of harrow discs. He strategically placed the work near Titus Creek in front of the William A. Grant Water and Environmental Center at Walla Walla Community College (fig. 31). At the dedication of the sculpture, in November of 2008, Steve VanAusdle, President of Walla Walla Community College spoke about the benefits of having a public sculpture on their campus. He described Simpson's *Walla Walla Campanile* as the "intersection between art and technology." The work helps the community understand the environmental challenges they may face.[279] "This instrument will be an indicator for us, it sends a message to just how important sustainability is in our lives and in the lives of the people who will follow us."[280] Like Simpson's other work, the campanile is more than site-specific, it is space-specific as well.

Two pieces exist in conjunction in this work: *Implement Instrument: Walla Walla Campanile*, and *Poetic License* (both 2006-2008).[281] *Walla Walla Campanile: Implement Instrument* appears to be a tower of bells, but it instead consists of sixty-one salvaged steel harrow disks that are vertically attached and reach toward the sky.[282] These disks once plowed the local loess soil, but now they stand as a reminder of the land's past. All shapes and sizes, the disks—one stacked on top of the other to create a tower—undulate up toward the sky. A computer triggers the pneumatic system in the campanile, which rings the bells at a specific time of day. The data that signals the bells

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[279] Maureen Johnson, letter to author, December 1, 2008. Maureen Johnson works at the Water and Environmental Center in Walla Walla, Washington.

[280] Ibid.

[281] The two projects were funded by the one-half of one-percent-for-art fund through Washington State. The $380,000 came from the addition to the Washington State penitentiary. See Kirsten Telander, "Buster Simpson's Art Dedicated," *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, November 20, 2008, A4.

[282] Buster Simpson, "Instrument Implement: Walla Walla Campanile," 2008, unpublished artist's statement.

to ring is gathered from the nearby Walla Walla Watershed.[283] When the disks are rung, the sound represents the return of the salmon to the watershed. If no sound occurs, a silence warns the community about the environmental state of their water.

To visually represent the connection of the land to the water, Simpson attached a cage to the campanile. In the cage is a bronze salmon, which is painted bright yellow. The salmon represents the proverbial "canary in a coal mine," or as Simpson states, "a living indicator of the condition of the watershed."[284] The fish is vertically balanced; its nose is placed on a glass egg. The entire structure is supported by an industrial-looking tower, which intentionally mimics the power transmission towers that are ubiquitous in eastern Washington.[285] Although these towers are aesthetically unattractive, they bring hydroelectric power to cities in Washington state.

The top of the tower comes to a point—almost suggesting a tepee. On one side is a cone-shaped horn used to broadcast the sound of the ringing disks. Opposite the horn, facing south, is a square solar panel. The panel is both practical and symbolic. The solar cells capture light, which is then converted into energy used to sound the chimes. Symbolically, it reminds the community to be responsible in their energy consumption.

Also, on the reverse side of the panel is an image of McNary Dam, a hydroelectric dam that spans the Columbia River. This is one of the largest hydroelectric power facilities in the United States. Although hydroelectric dams can garner renewable energy, the technology often leads to a high mortality rate of turbine-passed fish. In the Pacific

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[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Despite the good that the power transmission towers bring, they are a hazard to large birds which now make their nests in the towers. The most common destruction of the nests is caused by wind, for the towers do not provide the shelter or support that tree branches can give. See Karen Steenhof, Michael N. Kochert and Jerry A. Roppe, "Nesting by Raptors and Common Raven on Electrical Transmission Line Towers," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 57 (April 1993): 271-81.

Northwest, these turbines have greatly decreased juvenile populations of native fish—Pacific salmon, steelhead, American shad, catadromous eels—all of which depend on traveling from the river to the ocean in order to reproduce.[286] In 1992, twelve species of native Pacific fish in the Columbia River were listed under the Endangered Species Act due to the numerous fish deaths caused by dams.[287]

In 2006, the Army Corps of Engineers installed a safe passageway for juvenile traveling fish in three dams along the Snake River. Officially called "removable spillway weirs," they provide three benefits to the river: improved power supply, better water quality, and greater fish passageways that result in fewer deaths. At McNary dam, a "temporary spillway weir" was installed. This structure is less expensive to built, but still contains a passageway for fish to travel over the dam's spillway.[288] The image of the dam on the sculpture suggests how human intervention can greatly impact the environment.

The sculpture is placed on a pedestal. On the pedestal, Simpson attached license plates that were stamped by the inmates at the Walla Walla Penitentiary. Each side incorporates a different phrase that is stamped in aluminum. "WALLA WALLA CAMPANILE INSTRUMENT IMPLEMENT 2008" is on one side while "DISCS HERALD THE WATERSHED PEAL OF CHANGE RINGING" is written on the other.

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[286] G. F. Cada, "A Review of Studies Relating to the Effects of Propeller-Type Turbine Passage on Fish Early Life Stages," *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 10 (April 1990): 418-26, esp. 418.

[287] Steve Rainey, Lynn A. Reese, and Timothy O. Wik, "Removable Spillway Weir Development for Fish Passage, Power, and Water Quality Benefits," *Hydro Review* 5 (August 2006): 5. Also see J. M. Plumb, et. al., *Behavior and Survival of Radio-Tagged Juvenile Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Relative to the Performance of a Removable Spillway Weir at Lower Granite Dam,* Washington, 2003, U. S. Geological Survey Report to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

[288] Removal spillway weirs were installed at Ice Harbor dam, Lower Granite dam, and Lower Monumental dam. See, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District, published at http://www.nww.usace.army.mil in February 2009.

Poems written in license plate capital letters adorn the remaining two walls. One is written by Jennifer Boyden, professor at Walla Walla Community College, and the other is written by Simpson's daughter, Hillela.[289]

Poetic License

Adjacent to the William A. Grant Water and Environmental Center, Simpson also incorporated license plate words in a panel that stands near the merger of Titus Creek and Mill Creek (fig. 32). One-hundred and forty-four plates capture nine different poems, all following the other in sequence, yet each one is differentiated by color.[290] The panel begins with a poem written in white letters against a blue license background, "WE ALL BEGIN / SWIMMING IN DARKNESS / IT IS WATER THAT BRINGS US HERE." Another one reads, "THERE IS NOTHING / NOT TIED / TO THE FLOW / HABITAT IS BROKEN / BY HABITS WORTH RENDING." The last poem states, "SALMON CLIMB BROKEN RUNGS." The words, placed near the confluence of two streams, are a reminder of the fragility of the place.

The licenses used for the background of the poems are also an intentional inclusion. This project was funded through the Art in Public Places program. In this specific case, the building construction costs came from the addition to the Walla Walla State Penitentiary. Inside the penitentiary, some offenders work at the Correctional Industries Programs, providing services and products to the community. Along with working in the garment factory that makes correctional officer uniforms and food service clothing, offenders also work in the metal plant, producing signs, metal chair frames, and also license plates. They make more than half a million license plates every year for the

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[289] Simpson, unpublished artist's statement.

[290] Ibid. The poets and collaborators were Whitman College professors of creative writing Jennifer Boyden, Janice King, Dan Lamberton, and Katrina Roberts.

state of Washington. Simpson collaborated with inmates to create specific poetic words on the license plates he used in his installation.

Arising Controversy

Despite the praise Simpson received from the Walla Walla Community College officials, the work created some controversy. Originally the work was to be placed near the downtown Macy's store and other local businesses of Walla Walla. But after business owners expressed disapproval, Steve VanAusdale suggested positioning the piece near the Environmental Center.[291] Having made a professional career out of creating artwork in public places, Simpson responded appropriately to the community's concerns. He organized a show in the Whitman College Sheehan Gallery that included the disks for the gallery patrons to ring and hear the sound for themselves.[292] As stated in the exhibition catalogue, the Sheehan Gallery served as "a public laboratory to test and explore various aspects of his proposal."[293] Also, the show included information about the long and arduous process of creating a public work of art. Along with the exhibition, Simpson organized a public hearing to discuss the project with the community as well as to answer questions. One member of the Washington State Arts Commission committee, Denise Slattery, stated:

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[291] Kirsten Telander, "Simpson's Artwork to Be Dedicated: The Project Moved to WWCC after Its Proposed Site Downtown Created Controversy," *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin,* November 17, 2008, A3. Many articles were written in the local newspaper discussing this controversy: Kathy Korengel, "Harrow Disc Art Proposal to go Before City Council," *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, October 31, 2006, A1; Kathy Korengel, "Until More Residents Chime In, Public Art on Hold," *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin,* November 2, 2006, A1; Erick Anderson, "Simpson Art Project Welcomed at State Art Panel Meeting," *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin,* February 21, 2007, A3.

[292] This show was open from August 26 to October 5, 2006.

[293] *Instrument Implement: Work by Buster Simpson*, exh. cat. (Walla Walla, WA: Sheehan Art Gallery, 2006), n.p.

> I realize that public art is challenging. Most people are looking for the statue . . . . But we wanted something that would engender a dialog and conversation, and Buster's piece does that. It gets people to think about the activity in the creek, the viability for habitat and the purpose of dams—in clever ways. It's a very rich contribution to our public art, and it's not without controversy. And that's a good thing.[294]

After the sculpture was relocated, the community embraced it. The *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* followed the controversy closely and welcomed the change and the invitation for the public to help shape its art.[295]

Space-specific Sculpture

Instrument Implement: Walla Walla Campanile and *Poetic License* weave environmental education and community involvement together. At the dedication ceremony of *Instrument Implement*, Simpson said that the sculpture can also be tied to the use of the adjacent building: the Water and Environmental Center. Affiliated with the college, the building creates an academic environment to teach students and community members how to manage water, how to mitigate impacts on watersheds, and how to enhance the environment, in general. The sculpture reflects the function of the building. It signals the health of the river that runs through the community. The visual aesthetics of the sculpture remind viewers to recycle, to conserve, and to think about the aesthetics of their space.

Through the words and the location, Simpson's *Poetic License* reminds viewers to be aware of their surroundings. Neither the words nor the license plates upon which they are written are arbitrary. The poems and the materials connect the piece to the land. Simpson noted in his dedication speech that, "Our watersheds are nearing default and that

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[294] Telander, A3.

[295] The Editorial Board of the Union-Bulletin, "Moving Public Art to WWCC Is a Sound Decision: The Community Now Has an Opportunity to Help Shape the Direction of the Publicly Funded Art Project," *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin,* January 4, 2007, A3.

is all the more reason that this water center be successful in communicating regional environmental solutions."[296] At the end of the dedication, with students, college officials, professors and community members present, Simpson picked up two wooden mallets to play the campanile's disks. Hearing the sound of the chimes, President Steve VanAusdle aptly said, "let sustainability ring."[297]

Conclusion

Simpson's space-specific public art uses the surrounding space to acknowledge a specific site's historical and environmental importance. He incorporates a fourth dimension, time, into his projects. Because of this element, his art can connect to the community in ways that site-specific work cannot. Simpson's bus stop benches are not public art pieces that demand attention. Instead, as one man noticed, people use them "the way an old farmer might lean against a fence post that happens conveniently to be there when he is tired."[298] Some of Simpson's installations are ephemeral, *Shared Clotheslines* and *90 Pine Street*, for example. But his basic message of connecting neighborhoods and recycling old buildings and materials still operate. *Seattle George Monument* recalls a past history of assimilation that takes time into account. *Instrument Implement: Walla Walla Campanile* chimes in response to the health of the watershed.

Simpson's space-specific art deals with relationships between people, their history, and their surroundings. Because his works are on display in neighborhoods, and not in museums, his designs incorporate the surrounding space. Although his installations are aesthetic, their success depends on more than just being seen by the public. Due to

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[296] Maureen Johnson, letter to author.

[297] Ibid.

[298] Jim Heynen, "First Avenue: Solid Benches, Fragile Trees," in *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art*, eds. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 27.

their inherent complexity, Simpson's works depend on viewers' direct participation. The action of the person who sits on the ready-made stone benches waiting for the bus determines the work's success. By watching the turn of George Washington's profile, citizens can witness the ivy being trimmed and think about the past assimilation of native peoples. College students and Walla Walla residents can hear their campanile ring and contemplate the health of their local streams. These actions are put in place to foster action, community, and ecological and social awareness. By embodying the dynamism of a local place, Simpson's space-specific works interact with people, history, and nature to enhance its basic quality.

Figure 21: Michael Heizer, *Adjacent, Against, Upon,* (1976). Seattle, Washington. Diane Shamash and Steven Huss, eds., *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 102.

Figure 22: Buster Simpson, *First Avenue Streetscape Project: Bus Stop Benches,* (1983). Diane Shamash and Steven Huss, eds., *A Field Guide to Seattle's Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991), 72.

Figure 23: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc,* (1981-1989). New York City, New York. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 71.

Figure 24: Buster Simpson, *Shared Clotheslines: Banners of Human Reoccupation,* (1978). Seattle, Washington. Buster Simpson, "Perpendicular and Parallel Streetscape Stories," in *Belltown Paradise,* eds. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg, and Anthony Elms, (Chicago: White Walls, 2004), 44.

Figure 25: Buster Simpson, *First Avenue Streetscape Project: Bus Stop Benches*, (1983-present). Photograph of Buster Simpson and *Bus Stop Benches* taken by the author. Seattle, Washington.

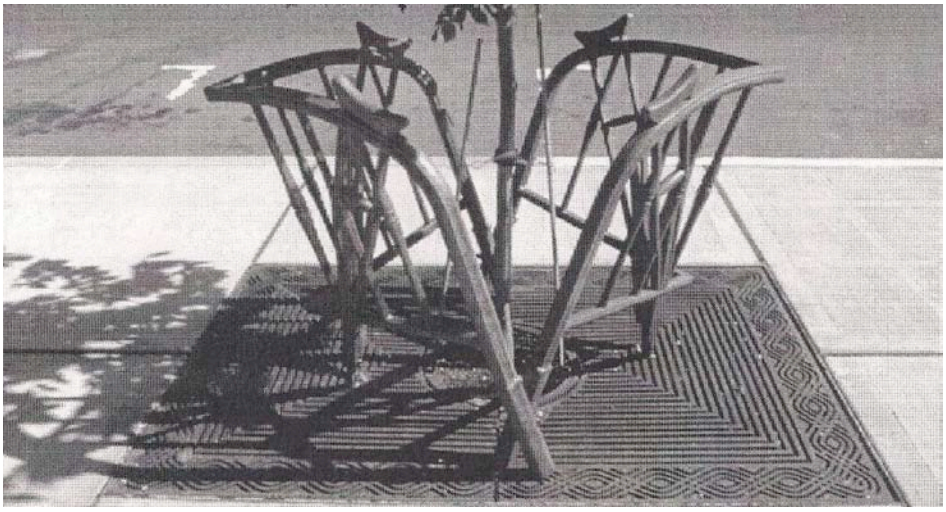

Figure 26: Buster Simpson, *Tree Guards,* (1978-2000). Seattle, Washington. Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's Archives.

Figure 27: Buster Simpson, *Seattle George Monument,* (1989). Seattle, Washington. Photograph by the author.

Figure 28: James Wehn, *Bust of Chief Seattle,* (1909). Seattle, Washington. James Rupp, *Art in Seattle's Public Places: An Illustrated Guide* (Seattle, WA, and London: University of Washington Press, 1992), 19.

Figure 29: James Wehn, *Chief Seattle*, (1912). Seattle, Washington. James Rupp, *Art in Seattle's Public Places: An Illustrated Guide* (Seattle, WA, and London: University of Washington Press, 1992), 104.

Figure 30: Chief Seattle, (1865) In Vi Hilbert, "When Chief Seattle Spoke," in *A Time of Gathering: Native Heritage in Washington State,* ed. Robin K. Wright (Seattle, WA, and London: University of Washington Press, 1991), 260.

Figure 31: Buster Simpson, *Walla Walla Campanile,* (2008). Walla Walla, Washington. Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's Archives.

Figure 32: Buster Simpson, *Poetic License,* (2008), Walla Walla, Washington. Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's Archives.

CHAPTER 3: EXPANDING THE PRACTICUM:

SIMPSON'S EDUCATIONAL ECO-ART

Introduction

> Among the basic environmental knowledge that is needed in order to better understand and develop connections with one's environment and community are the foundations of ecology. These foundations also are critical in helping one understand the impacts of human actions on the environment.[299]

Ecological education can be administered through a variety of teaching methods.[300] Classrooms, books, and oral history are but a few ways in which ecological information can be taught. Buster Simpson's artwork provides yet another way of conveying information about caring for the environment. Simpson's Eco-Art is created to visually stimulate the public to be aware of the effects of industry on human and environmental health. Because Simpson places sculptures in public places around the country, his work can be seen as educational Eco-Art, and it can be used to promote the care of local places.

Simpson's works are not necessarily created to please the eye, but rather to promote action. Simpson's aesthetic statements are not meant to fix the problem at hand; instead, they are used to highlight the environmental problems. In Simpson's own words, his work attempts to "mitigate the history of negligence and create a holistic future."[301]

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[299] The North American Association for Environmental Education, "Ecology and Environmental Education: Key Principals," *Environmental Education and Training Partnership* 107 (December 2002): 1-3. This article was funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and managed by the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point.

[300] Examining the causes behind the ecological crisis is beyond the scope of this chapter. See Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (March 10, 1967): 1203-07, for a historical analysis of environmental decay caused by technology and religion; for another approach, see Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), which analyses the detrimental effects of pesticides, among other harmful pollutants, on the environment.

[301] Buster Simpson's artist statement, quoted in Sue Spaid, *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002), 143.

This chapter examines how Simpson's commingling of science and art provides contexts for the ills of the environment in which his works are placed. The success of his sculptures depends not on solving problems scientifically by invisibly neutralizing polluted water, for example, but by engaging viewers and spurring them on to envision the long-term impacts of human activities on certain sites.

Simpson's educational philosophy is apparent in the four works analyzed in this chapter. *I Love Canal* (1978), and its offshoot series called *When the Tide is Out, the Table is Set* (1983-84), consisted of cast ceramic plates placed near sewage outputs that accumulated toxins on their surfaces. The plates' excremental glaze gave visible evidence of the polluted waters. *Hudson River Purge* (1991), the second work under examination, was a performance in which Simpson placed sculpted limestone lozenges in the Hudson River in order to make the water less acidic. This performance was recorded in local and national newspapers, art history books, and popular magazines. *Host Analog* (1991) is a sculpture that began with one decaying log; the log now supports a small ecosystem of trees, saplings, and moss. Due to the sculpture's prominent location, next to the Portland Convention Center in downtown Portland, Oregon, the work can be seen by many. Educating the crowds who enter and leave the center, this sculpture juxtaposes the time it takes to cut down a tree to the time it takes to grow a forest. Finally, *Monolith* (2005) is an installation in Northern California that educates viewers about the materials and labor used to create Shasta Dam while simultaneously revealing the dam's footprint upon the earth.

Through these works, Simpson's art reveals an anti-aesthetic, which, as Hal Foster explains, is "a critique which destructures the order of representations in order to reinscribe them."[302] These four examples of Simpson's work reflect this theory—

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[302] Hal Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), xv.

Simpson highlights the environmental degradation in communities in order to deconstruct the causes behind the destruction. Pollution, deforestation, and industrial degradation are all examined in a creative manner. Because each of these examples contains a process that reveals a negative outcome caused by human intervention, Simpson's work embodies an environmental message that goads viewers into action in support of the local environment.

Eco-Art

Simpson's sculptures are grounded in a genre called Eco-Art. Ecology, with its roots in science, is seemingly disparate from the field of art. But in Eco-Art, the two fields come together to form a new way of looking at the natural world, focusing upon the connection between organisms and environments.[303] When environmental education is disseminated in a visual manner, it can help a wider audience understand otherwise difficult ecological concepts. Timothy W. Luke, a theorist of environmental politics, has noted that,

> to change ecology globally, it is now clear that the inhabitants of each human locality must reconsider the entire range of their ecological interconnections to local, regional, national, and international exchanges of goods and services . . . . Being more mindful of local environments, histories and communities ideally should lead to the development of an ecologically sustainable, self-reliant society.[304]

The responsibility of caring for this planet falls not only on large governments or ruling bodies, but also on small and local communities.

Artists and ecologists make good partners for the development of an ecologically sustainable, self-reliant society. Eco-Art scholar Linda Weintraub claims that "ecology by

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[303] Greg M. Thomas, *Art and Ecology in Nineteenth-Century France: The Landscapes of Theodore Rousseau* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 197.

[304] Timothy Luke, "Art and the Environmental Crisis: From Commodity Aesthetics to Ecology Aesthetics," *Art Journal* 51 (Summer 1992): 72.

itself is not a force for environmental reform. It needs a medium to convey its information . . . . When artists are also environmentalists, they guide, originate, manage, and monitor policies that advance sustainable alternatives."[305] Eco-artists can propose solutions to problems such as regenerating ecosystems and detoxifying streams. Art installations, due to creative thinking, can attempt to reclaim, restore, and mitigate environments, inform communities about their surrounding land, and help envision an environmentally healthy future.[306] Thus, this art and science merger, if conveyed in a successful manner, can bridge the divide between transmitting and understanding necessary information about the state of our ecosystem.

A Brief History of Earth Art

Not all art that uses earth materials is considered Eco-Art. Earth Art developed concurrently with Eco-Art. After Abstract Expressionism had reached its peak and Pop Art was in vogue, Earth Art (also known as Land Art and Earthworks), emerged as a response to Minimalism.[307] The Earth Art artists were dissatisfied with their artistic culture and rejected creating work just for the museum. These artists, including Robert

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[305] Linda Weintraub and Skip Schuckmann, *Environmentalities: Twenty-Two Approaches to Eco-Art* (Rhinebeck, NY: Artnow Publications, 2007), 17.

[306] Beverly Naidus, *Arts for Change: Teaching Outside the Frame* (Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2009), 62. Naidus is a Professor of Art at the University of Washington, Tacoma, and teaches an Eco-Art class. This is her definition.

[307] Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis, *Land and Environmental Art* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2005), 12. For good analyses about the definition of Earth Art, also see Gilles A. Tiberghien, *Land Art* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995); Ben Tufnell, *Land Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006); Willoughby Sharp, "Notes toward an Understanding of Earth Art," in *Earth Art* (Ithaca, NY: Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, Cornell University, 1969); John Beardsley, "Earthworks: The Landscape after Modernism," in *Denatured Visions: Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stuart Wrede and William Howard Adams (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 110-17; Sidney Tillim, "Earthworks and the New Picturesque," *Artforum* 7 (December 1968): 43-44; and Martin Hogue, "The Site as Project: Lessons from Land Art and Conceptual Art," *Journal of Architectural Education* 57 (February 2004): 54-61.

Smithson, Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, Dennis Oppenheim, and Hans Haacke, began to make large-scale works on the surface of the earth. They abandoned fine art materials—clay, bronze, and marble—and began sculpting instead with unrefined materials such as rocks and dirt. Although diverse, the Earth Artists were united in their common conviction that art can succeed outside of the walls of a gallery. Thus, taking their work outdoors, the space became the landscape and their materials became the Earth.[308] Their ultimate goal was to create work that adhered to the standard Modernist function, but outside the halls of Modernism.[309]

Criticism against Earth Art: "An Aesthetic Affront to Nature"

Ironically, the movement's critical acclaim came after an exhibition inside a gallery. In 1968, the Dwan Gallery in New York City exhibited drawings in an exhibition entitled "Earthworks."[310] The naming of the genre came specifically from this exhibition, as well as the medium—the earth—that the artists used.[311] Organized by

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[308] The first artist who used the earth as sculptural material was Herbert Bayer; he constructed his *Earth Mound*, which consisted of a forty-foot circular berm in Aspen, Colorado, in 1955. See Jan van der Marck, *Herbert Bayer: From Type to Landscape* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Museum and Hopkins Center Art Gallery, 1977). The sculpture is in the yard of the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies. In 1967, Michael Heizer created his first earthwork, entitled *North, East, South, West,* which consisted of wood and sheet metal placed into the ground in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California See, Michael Goven, "Michael Heizer," Dia Art Foundation, http://www.diabeacon.org/exhibs_b/heizer/essay.html. The work has since been reconstructed at the Dia Museum in Beacon, Texas. The dimensions and materials are exactly the same as Heizer's original.

[309] Rosalind Krauss wrote a seminal essay discussing the changing dynamics of sculpture, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October,* no. 8 (Spring 1979): 30-44.

[310] Kastner and Wallis, 14.

[311] The title also is a reference to Brian W. Aldiss's science-fiction novel, *Earthworks,* published in 1965. The premise revolves around a fictional future that has reached environmental catastrophe. See Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks of the Sixties* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002), 150.

Robert Smithson, ten men created work that "posed an explicit challenge to conventional notions of exhibition and sales, in that they were either too large or too unwieldy to be collected; most were represented only by photographs, further emphasizing their resistance to acquisition."[312] Work shown included Robert Morris's *Earthwork* (1968), which consisted of a pile of dirt on the gallery floor intermixed with steel rods, wood scraps, and barbed wire. Smithson's *A Nonsite, Franklin, New Jersey,* consisted of five white bins that were filled with rocks and placed directly on the floor in the gallery (fig. 33).[313] Although the works consisted of earthen materials, they had no ties to environmentalism. Instead, they reflected formalist aesthetics.

One month prior to the Dwan exhibition, Smithson published "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," which became the quasi-manifesto of the "Earthworks" movement. In this essay, Smithson analyzes Earth Art through aspects such as language and process. In one segment of his article, he discusses the idea of a desert, claiming "the desert is less 'nature' than a concept, a place that swallows up boundaries."[314] While the concepts in his essay were rooted in natural elements of the earth, the discussion never focused on the effect of human interaction with the environment. Grace Glueck, critic for the Sunday *New York Times*, affirmed the new use of earth materials in her newspaper review:

> A Back-to-the-Landscape show is burgeoning at—of all places!—
> the Dwan Gallery, though you can't exactly call it a revival of the
> Barbizon School. The medium (and message) is Mother Earth

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[312] Brian Wallis, "Survey," in *Land and Environmental Art*, ed. Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis (New York: Phaidon Press, 2005), 23.

[313] Boettger, 128.

[314] Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," *Artforum* 7 (September 1968): 50. For an article that compares Smithson's work to Simpson's, see: Matthew Kangas, "Earthworks Revisited: From Smithson to Simpson," *Arts: Newsletter of the King County Arts Commission* 11 (October 1982): 5-8.

> herself—furrowed and burrowed, heaped and piled, mounded and rounded and trenched.315

The Dwan Gallery show presented ordinary materials in high-art forms. Neil Jenney said he used the environment "in sort of a theatrical manner."316 The Earth Artists were part of a larger cultural protest against the commercialization of art in the 1960s, not a nascent environmental movement. Suzaan Boettger argues that,

> it would be more accurate to say that [Earth Artists] were more or less not against environmentalism . . . . As artists working in radical modes, making environmental installations rather than discrete objects easily salable, out of abject materials, and holding anti-Vietnam War views, we can presume that they were also partial to environmental protection. But in the late 1960s, ecological issues were not a direct source of Earthworks.317

Plainly stated, the common ground that the Earth Artists shared was their use of the Earth as material.

Even though the Earth artists seemed not to add political agendas to their sculptures, they inadvertently became the object of protests. Robert Smithson's *Island of Broken Glass* proposal in 1970, which planned to dump one-hundred tons of glass onto a

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315 Grace Glueck, "Moving Mother Earth," *New York Times,* October 6, 1968, D3.

316 Another exhibition of Earth Art was held in 1969 at the Andrew Dickson White Museum, Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, curated by Willoughby Sharp. In conjunction with the show, Sharp held a symposium and conducted interviews with Earth Artists. For more of the analysis, see: Thomas W. Leavitt, "Earth," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings,* ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1996), 175-87. Oppenheim claimed, "I was more concerned with the negative process of excavating that shape from the mountainside than with making an earthwork as such. It was just a coincidence that I did this with earth . . . at that point I began to think very seriously about place, the physical terrain." Heizer, too, responded in a manner that told of his formal concerns: "I'm mainly concerned with physical properties, with density, volume, mass and space." Liza Bear and Willoughby Sharp, "Discussions with Heizer, Oppenheim, Smithson," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1996), 242. Also see, Boettger, 152.

317 Boettger, 151-52.

small island off the coast of Vancouver, caused controversy.[318] Those opposed to the project claimed the shattered glass would harm the native wildlife. The Canadian Society for Pollution and Environmental Control halted the project.[319] Smithson argued that "ecology is the guilty side of economics," and by creating his large-scale work on the island, it "is not meant to *save* anything or anybody, but to reveal things as they are."[320]

Despite Smithson's environmentally unresponsive artworks, some of his writings do prove his concern towards the earth. In his essay, "Untitled 1971," he wrote:

> Across the country there are many mining areas, disused quarries, and polluted lakes and rivers. One practical solution for the utilization of such devastated places would be land and water recycling in terms of "Earth Art." . . . Art can become a resource that mediates between the ecologist and the industrialist. Ecology and industry are not one-way streets, rather they should be crossroads. Art can help to provide the needed dialect between them. A lesson can be learned from the Indian cliff dwellings and earthworks mounds. Here we see nature and necessity in consort.[321]

Regardless of this claim, many critics held Smithson and other Earth artists accountable for their destruction towards the earth. One critic argued that Earth Art, "with very few exceptions, not only doesn't improve upon the natural environment, it destroys it."[322]

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[318] Eugenie Tsai, *Robert Smithson Unearthed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 95. The islet Simpson planned to create his work was a rocky island called Miami. It was fifty yards long.

[319] Robert Hobbs, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 185-86. Also see Wallis, 32.

[320] These quotes were from transcriptions found in the Robert Smithson Papers at the Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution (roll 3833, frames 1104-79). This quote came from a conversation that is not dated. Also found in Tsai, 95-96.

[321] Robert Smithson, "Untitled 1971," in *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 220.

[322] Wallis, 32. Another critic, Sidney Tillim, responded to a review of the "Earthworks" show, stating that the new Earthworks "were simply an updated form of the 'picturesque'—that is, landscape seen in a pictorial way. Like Minimalism, earthworks were useless artifacts that created a setting more than space, and like the 18th-century picturesque, served largely to define the observer as 'a man of taste.'" The comparison of Earthworks to the Picturesque landscape style of the nineteenth century is appropriate; however, this comparison is too large for the scope

Nearly two decades after the *Earthworks* show, Allen Carlson claimed that Earth Art is, indeed, an "aesthetic affront to nature."[323] After his analysis of work by Smithson and Heizer, he states: "It becomes clear that environmental works of art can go further than simply being similar in appearance to the aesthetic affronts of our technological society. They can be virtually identical to them in appearance."[324] He concludes that art placed in the landscape should not adulterate the earth, but instead "appreciate nature's own aesthetic interest and merit."[325]

Eco-Art: Connective Aesthetics

Unlike its Earth Art cousin, Eco-Art involves more than just creating work out of the land. It is specifically created to respond to the environmental crisis. Modern aesthetics, as seen with Earth Art examples, focuses on the philosophical and formalist aspects of art. In response, art critic Suzi Gablik noted that placing an emphasis on modern aesthetics forces the separation of art and life, and thus does not bridge communities. To counter this self-indulgent art, Gablik encouraged artists to weave "environmental and social responsibility directly into their work."[326] This "connective aesthetics" that Gablik promotes, describes the ground upon which Eco-Art is founded—the work is created not to describe or illustrate the landscape, but instead, to connect the viewer's attitudes and knowledge to his or her surroundings.[327] Barbara Matilsky notes

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of this chapter. See Sidney Tillim, "Earthworks and the New Picturesque," *Artforum* 7 (December 1968): 43-44.

[323] Allen Carlson, "Is Environmental Art an Aesthetic Affront to Nature?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16 (1986): 152.

[324] Ibid.

[325] Ibid., 161.

[326] Suzi Gablik, "Connective Aesthetics," *American Art* 6 (Spring 1992): 2.

[327] Ronald W. Neperud, "Art, Ecology, and Art Education: Practices and Linkages," *Art Education* 50 (November 1997): 18.

that, "by creating ecological artworks, artists are teaching us the lessons of survival as well as celebrating the experience of belonging to a larger community."[328]

The examples of Earth Art given above were produced for aesthetic reasons, yet they broke barriers in terms of expanding the materials, size, and the anti-commodification of objects. Eco-Art can embody these formal characteristics, but it can also merge ecological information with ideas such as politics, religion, spirituality, and personal interpretation. This merging of ecological art and ideas can benefit society and neighborhoods by helping them to see the environment in a new light or to connect with the surrounding land. Eco-artists built upon the experiments of the Earth Artists. Large-scale use of earth materials, crossed with the increasingly dire environmental crisis, allowed artists to create provocative and imaginative works that promoted ecological awareness.

Examples of Eco-Artists

Reflecting the burgeoning environmental movement, Eco-artists connected this environmental philosophy to their work. As art critic Eleanor Heartney has noted, Eco-artists have "always sought to heal the earth from the wounds inflicted by civilization."[329] Among the first artists to promote global environmental awareness in their work were Helen and Newton Harrison.[330] Their projects, such as *The Lagoon Cycle* (1972-82), addressed the links between watershed restoration and food production

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[328] Barbara C. Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, and Rizzoli International, 1992), 56.

[329] Eleanor Heartney, "Mapping a Better World," *Art in America* 91 (October 2003): 115.

[330] See Craig Adcock, "Conversational Drift: Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison," *Art Journal* 51 (Summer 1992): 35-45, for a good interview with the Harrisons. The Harrison's ecological philosophy behind their work is evident in their answers.

by using charts and flow graphs in museum installations.[331] *Meditations on the Sacramento River, the Delta and Bays at San Francisco* (1977) consisted of billboards and posters that drew attention to the then-current irrigation practices in the Central Valley of California. The Harrisons placed the billboards around San Francisco to educate the public about the irresponsible farming practices and the damage pesticides and dams could cause to the land (fig. 34).[332]

Other artists also incorporated the merging of nature and art into their work. Alan Sonfist created *Time Landscape: Greenwich Village, New York* (1978-present), a green space in Manhattan that exists as a living memorial to the native trees and plants that were once abundant in Manhattan but have since been replaced with buildings and concrete (fig. 35).[333] Mierle Laderman Ukeles shook hands with all the garbage collectors and sanitation workers in New York City and called her urban performance *Touch Sanitation* (1979-80) (fig. 36).[334] Patricia Johanson attempted to clean polluted lagoons to return them to their natural states.[335] Mel Chin created *Revival Field*, in

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[331] Helen and Newton Harrison, *The Lagoon Cycle,* exh. cat. (Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, 1985), n.p.

[332] Matilsky, 67-8.

[333] Ibid., 80. Although the idea of *Time Landscape* was first conceived in 1968, a decade passed before the first trees were planted in La Guardia Place. The indigenous species—wild roses, red cedars, grey birches, and oak trees—now grow, untamed, right in the city center. Also see a compilation of writings edited by Sonfist. See, Alan Sonfist, ed., *Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art* (New York: Dutton, 1983).

[334] Robert C. Morgan, "Touch Sanitation: Mierle Laderman Ukeles," *High Performance* 19 (Fall 1982): 62-5. Also see Robert Storr, "Mierle Ukeles at Feldman," *Art in America* 53 (February 1985): 76. There have been negative critiques which did criticize Ukeles's work, claiming she was using sociology in the place of art. The critic Robert Storr critiqued her *Touch Sanitation,* claiming: "For her part, Ukeles, a self-styled independent, an 'Artist,' brought absolutely no sociological understanding or political conviction to her project. Thus the information she gathered merely illustrates the obvious, which is otherwise a mildly ingratiating exercise in common courtesy." See her own response to her work: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, "Maintenance Art Works," *Whitewalls* 25 (Spring 1990): 90-97.

[335] Caffyn Kelley, *Art and Survival: Patricia Johanson's Environmental Projects* (Salt Spring Island, BC: Islands Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, 2006). Johanson's early

collaboration with Rufus L. Chaney, in order to clean up waste from the soil at the Pig's Eye landfill in St. Paul, Minnesota (fig. 37).[336] He planted "hyperaccumulating plants," which took the toxins out of the soil.[337] Chin's idea in *Revival Field* was to create a garden, cultivated carefully in a place that life has been stifled. By combining creativity with a call to action, these artists renew derelict urban areas and decaying landfills.

Concurrent with these works, Simpson, too, weaves didactic environmentalist messages into the aesthetics of his works. Yet Simpson differs from these artists because he places human interaction at the center of his sculptures. He works directly with the community. Mel Chin's work, for example, helps to restore a toxic site, but the installation does not focus on a particular location or community. Because the site could be anywhere—abandoned landfills are ubiquitous—the work's nature resounds globally as opposed to locally. Simpson's agenda is to share his ideas with people. The strength of his work lies in the didactic qualities that allow him to educate the public about environmental issues.

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installations, such as *Cyrus Field* (1971), incorporated paths made from redwood, cement, and marble, which wound through the trees. What she wanted to promote was a series of "ecology rooms" where "themes and patterns unfold gradually, as in a musical composition, and nature is restructured and related to human scale, yet nothing is disturbed or displaced. Another work, entitled *Marciano Trail* (1997-99), consisted of trails that connected three major public sites outside of Boston. Each site linked tourism, community benefit, and infrastructure with ecological restoration.

[336] See Mel Chin, "A Composite Interview with Mel Chin," in *Inescapable Histories: Mel Chin*, ed. Helen Nagge and Deni McIntosh McHenry (Kansas City, MO: Mid-American Arts Alliance, 1996), 39-49. *Revival Field* was sponsored by the Walker Museum of Art in Minneapolis, and was maintained by the museum from 1991-1993. After 1993, the site was left to nature. Chin has two study drawings which are in the Walker's collection.

[337] Sally Kuzma, "Myth-Making and Myth Breaking: Multiple Meanings in Mel Chin's *Revival Field*," *Art Criticism* 10 (February 1994): 84. For information on the science behind the work, see Don Comis, "Metal Scavenging Plants to Cleanse the Soil," *Agricultural Research* 88 (November 1995): 4-9.

Visual Displays of Pollution: *I Love Canal* and *When the Tide Is Out the Table Is Set*

To educate a community about river pollution, Simpson placed eight concrete casts of picnic plates into the Niagara River near Lewiston, New York, in 1978. The plates, which looked similar to aluminum T.V. dinner plates from the 1950s, were placed near a sewage outfall that emptied directly into the river.[338] Simpson anchored the plates underneath one of the main outlets. Sewage poured over the pieces, staining the cement. This work, called "Setting of Eight in Toxic Spillway" was one grouping in a series of placement pieces, titled *I Love Canal.*[339]The plates were not created for their aesthetic beauty; instead, they were obvious visual statements meant to highlight local environmental destruction.[340]

The title not only refers to the idealistic 1950s culture of *I Love Lucy* and pre-packaged T.V. dinners, but also to the toxic waste disaster in the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York. Simpson created this series while working as an artist-in-residence at Artpark, a program that supports visual artists under New York State Parks and Recreation Commission in nearby Lewiston.[341] During this time, he

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[338] Ned Rifkin, *Buster Simpson WORKS*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1989), n.p. This exhibition catalogue contains an interview with Simpson conducted by Rifkin on February 6, 1989.

[339] Ned Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle,* exh. cat. (Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum, 1983), 35.This exhibition catalogue includes Rifkin's interview with Simpson on January 8, 1983. The catalogue records the Seattle artists in the exhibition held both in New York City and in Seattle, called "Outside New York: Seattle," from March 26 to June 1, 1983 at the New Museum, and from October 13 to November 27, 1983 at the Seattle Museum of Art.

[340] Another piece in the *I Love Canal* series was titled, "Blue Pike Hanging over the Niagara River," also from 1978. This consisted of weather vanes that moved with the wind. They were placed over the Niagara River, in order for the public to be aware of the extinction of fish and local species. See Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle,* 35.

[341] Rae Tyson, *Artpark 1978: Program in the Visual Arts* (Lewiston, NY: Artpark, 1979), 5. Artpark first opened in 1974. Under Dale McConathy, the first Executive Director, Artpark became a place where the process of created art was stressed. As McConathy stated, "[I hope to make] a successful grass roots operation which is not like museums or galleries . . . . Use

became aware of Love Canal. In 1977, the news of the neighborhood's plight had not yet made national news.

Buried beneath an elementary school and a residential neighborhood, chemicals were leaching from a long-abandoned hazardous waste site that lay under an old canal. Originally, the canal had been made in theory to connect the upper and lower Niagara River in order to create hydroelectricity for the new industries along the river in the nineteenth century.[342] The site was named for the original entrepreneur of the canal, William T. Love, who in the 1890s built a canal from the Niagara River to a planned community in the 1890s.[343] The canal was created to be part of a vast shipping lane that would bypass Niagara Falls and end in Lake Ontario. A 3,000 foot section of the canal was built, but it was never used due to an economic downturn in the same decade. In 1905, a business entrepreneur named Elon Hooker began the Hooker Electrochemical Company, which produced chlorine and caustic soda. From 1942 to 1952, the company disposed of more than 21,000 tons of hazardous waste, such as alkalis, caustics, fatty-acids, and chlorinated hydrocarbons, in the canal site.[344] In 1954, the Hooker Company

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the site as a laboratory where research can be done. It didn't have to be comprehensive or encyclopedic . . . . I wanted it to be as organic as possible. Impermanence was part of the philosophical condition of doing this." See also Lucy R. Lippard, "A is for Artpark," *Art in America* 62 (November-December 1974): 37-40.

[342] Thomas Hobbs Fletcher, *From Love Canal to Environmental Justice: The Politics of Hazardous Waste on the Canada and U. S. Border* (Petersborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003), 160, and Adeline Gordon Levine, *Love Canal: Science, Politics, and People* (Lexington, MA and Toronto: Lexington Books, 1982), 7. Also see: R. J. Smith, "The Risks of Living Near Love Canal," *Science* 217 (August 27, 1982): 808-809, 811; Craig E. Colten and Peter N. Skinner, *The Road to Love Canal: Managing Industrial Waste Before EPA* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), and Elizabeth D. Blum, *Love Canal Revisited* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

[343] Levine, 9.

[344] According to Levine, "many of the substances were known to be dangerous—caustics, alkalis, fatty acids, and chlorinated hydrocarbons from the manufacture of dyes, perfumes, solvents for rubber and synthetic resins, and other products—and were buried in metal or fiber barrels or in the form of sludge or liquid." Ibid., 10.

gave the site to the city at no cost. The school board of Niagara Falls chose the cheap land as the site for a new elementary school. To accommodate the school, a drainage system was created that dumped rainwater—and toxic waste—into the Niagara River.[345] During the time the school operated, the neighborhood decreased in population by 90%. Nearly 56% of children born between 1974 and 1978 had birth defects.[346] Alice Warner, a woman who lived in the neighborhood in 1978, gave one example of ecological destruction "[Toxic fumes] came over towards the houses like a white cloud and killed the grass and trees and burnt the paint off the back of the houses and made the other houses all black."[347] As David Axelrod, Commissioner of the New York State Health Department from 1979 to 1991, professed, the Love Canal tragedy became a "national symbol of a failure to exercise a sense of concern for future generations."[348]

Simpson's installation, *I Love Canal,* shed light on this kind of environmental disaster. Through his visual examples, Simpson creatively documented that toxins coming from human waste, which if not properly treated, pollute the environment. His cement plates, and his "glazes" make pollution visible.[349]

Simpson created a larger scaled version entitled *When the Tide is Out, the Table is Set*, while working as an artist in residence at Kohler's Art and Industry Program in

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[345] Ibid., 12. Levine cites Charles Thiele's "Report on site development work, 99th Street Elementary School. Niagara Falls, New York, Board of Education," from October 15, 1956.

[346] The statistic of the number of families that remain in the neighborhood comes from Elizabeth D. Blum, *Love Canal Revisited* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 28. The statistic of the birth defects was found on the Environmental Protection Agency Website, http://www.epa.gov/superfund/20years/ch1pg2.htm.

[347] Levine, 11.

[348] Sam Howe Verhovek, "After 10 Years, the Trauma of Love Canal Continues," *New York Times,* August 5, 1988, B1.

[349] The series of toxin-coated art was shown at the Western Front Society in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1980.

Sheboygan, Wisconsin, from 1983 to 1984. Instead of using concrete, as he used in his first series, he created place settings made of vitreous china (fig. 38). The Kohler Company uses vitreous china for their bathroom and kitchen products. Simpson employed the same materials, albeit for a different purpose. He created three hundred casts of T.V. dinner plates in an assembly-line fashion while working next to the Kohler employees creating toilets.[350] He low-fired the ceramic plates and then placed them into the sewage outfalls in Puget Sound in Seattle, in the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, and in the East River in New York City.[351]

Because these three waterways are connected to their surrounding cities, all are afflicted with pollution. Ohio's Cuyahoga River is most famously known as the "river that caught on fire." In 1969, an oil slick was set ablaze, causing the upper layer of the water to burn.[352] A *Time Magazine* article written in the same year gave a scathing report of the water's health:

> Some river! Chocolate-brown, oily, bubbling with subsurface gasses, it oozes rather than flows. "Anyone who falls into the Cuyahoga does not drown," Cleveland's citizens joke grimly. "He decays."[353]

The Puget Sound waterway is also polluted. Because the population is booming, this causes rainwater to flush pesticides, oil leaks, and other toxins from gutters to rivers and eventually into the sound. Industrial waste still plagues the waters, causing salmon and sea-bird populations to decline.[354] Due to New York City's dense population, the

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[350] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[351] Spaid, 98.

[352] Barney Warf and Brian Holly, "The Rise and Fall and Rise of Cleveland," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 551 (May 1997): 212.

[353] "The Cities: The Price of Optimism," *Time Magazine*, August 1, 1969, 41.

[354] Lisa Stiffler, "State of Puget Sound Troubling: Development Continues to Overtake Cleanup Efforts, Report Finds," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer,* January 19, 2005, A2. Also see Ransom A. Myers, Simon A. Levin, Russell Lande, Frances C. James, William W. Murdoch,

East River has been abused for centuries. As early as 1920, records show that 700 tons of untreated raw sewage flowed into the river daily.[355] Today, even though the sewage is treated before being released, recent studies prove that toxins still harm its biodiversity.[356]

Similar to the effect on the plates caused by the Niagara sewage, the ceramic casts placed in the rivers' sewer outflows also accumulated layers of toxins. Since Simpson used ocean water in two examples instead of river water for this series, he incorporated the tides into his work. In the Elliott Bay outfall in Puget Sound, he threw the plates under the sewage orifice at high tide, where they steeped in the polluted water. Once the tide retreated, Simpson gathered up the plates glistening with human excrement.

The title of the work—*When the Tide is Out, the Table is Set*—acknowledges a Samish Native American saying that links low tide to feasts of shellfish.[357] The adage referred to a time when the lowering tide would uncover crustaceans and shellfish all along the ocean shore, which the Samish would gather and feast upon for days.[358] Referring to the bounty of fish in the rivers' past, Simpson's work documents the present overabundance of pollutants and lack of aquatic life. In response to the low tide's "gifts"

Robert T. Paine, "Hatcheries and Endangered Salmon," *Science* 303 (March 26, 2004): 1980; and Marjorie J. Wonham and James T. Carlton, "Trends in Marine Biological Invasions at Local and Regional Scales: The Northeast Pacific Ocean as a Model System," *Biological Invasions* 7 (May 2005): 369-92.

[355] William Russell Willcox, *Joint Report with Comprehensive Plan and Recommendations* (New York: New York Port and Harbor Development Commission, 1920), 431.

[356] Alison Sweeney and Sergio A. Sañudo-Wilhelmy, "Dissolved Metal Contamination in the East River-Long Island Sound System: Potential Biological Effects," *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 48 (April 2004): 663-70.

[357] Matilsky, 96.

[358] Rifkin, *Outside New York: Seattle,* 35. Also see Henry A. Person, "Proverbs and Proverbial Lore from the State of Washington," *Western Folklore* 17 (July 1958): 176-85.

brought to the Seattle shore in the early 1980s, Simpson noted, "the effluent now becomes the embellishment."[359] Effluence, not affluence, and sludge, not shellfish, now reside on the plates and the beaches.[360]

After high-firing the stained plates, Simpson found that the toxins ironically made magnificent colors on the pottery (fig. 39). Due to the organic shape of the plates, at first glance, the colored "glaze" is not disturbing. One plate has a brownish-yellow background, which is very similar to the aesthetic result of a natural wood-fired glaze. On the left side of the sculpture, dark and muddy-brown splotches are apparent. Looking at the work through the lens of a potter, one might first assume that the glaze is too thick in that area, leaving an undesirable build-up that is not aesthetically pleasing to the eye. This build-up of chemicals was indeed the case; but instead of minerals and oxides that are normally used by glazers, human waste stained the ceramics. Symbolically, the affluence of people, reflected by pollution and river waste, destroys the affluence of aquatic life.

These sculptures are repositories of waste, and they document the toxins in the waters. Because the work makes the pollution in the water evident, Simpson's art can be seen as environmental education, a visual reminder that pollution in water needs to be addressed and mitigated.

Hudson Headwaters Purge (1991)

Simpson's work can be seen as educational in two regards: it sheds light on environmental issues, and it helps provide solutions to ecological problems. *Hudson Headwater Purge* (1991), accentuates the latter. This performance attracted the attention of scholars, museums, and local newspapers, and shed light on the polluted Hudson River

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[359] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[360] Rifkin, 25. Simpson also remarked that the waste could not even be used for fertilizer, due to its contaminated state.

(fig. 40).[361] Simpson sculpted soft chalk limestone disks, all twenty-four inches wide and three-inches thick, and threw them into the Hudson's headwaters. Despite being made of ordinary material, Simpson created the limestone sculptures with an alternative purpose in mind. Simpson realized that creating a public sculpture to memorialize the former beauty of the Hudson was not going to detoxify the river. Instead, as he said, "direct therapeutic action was needed."[362] He performed this public display at a site downstream from a manufacturing plant that was abandoned for decades and, years later, still devoid of life.[363] The tablets he used resembled large pills—an aesthetic and medicinal remedy to heal the river. Simpson explained the purpose behind their large size: "The greater the pill, the greater the problem."[364] The local and national dissemination of limestone "medicine" helped educate others about the Hudson River's problems.

Hudson River History

Simpson chose the Hudson River specifically for its historical value and importance. Spanning 315 miles, the Hudson River begins in the Adirondack Mountains and flows south through the state of New York. Since the seventeenth century, the river has been a major transportation channel. Today, it is part of the Erie Canal route, and is

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[361] Prior to this, in 1983, Simpson placed limestone disks in the Told Watershed, the drinking water source for New York City, and the Esopus River in 1984, the water source for Seattle. This performance is part of a continuing series; see Spaid, 97.

[362] Linda Weintraub, "Buster Simpson: 'Hudson Headwater Purge' Therapist," unpublished essay. I received this draft, from Buster Simpson, which was given to him by the author. She published a different version of this essay in her book that does not contain this quote: Weintraub and Schuckmann, *Environmentalities: Twenty-Two Approaches to Eco-Art*, 122-25.

[363] Weintraub and Schuckmann, 124.

[364] Ibid.

used for commercial shipping.[365] Historically, the river was also an important site for Native American settlement as well as early European colonists. Revolutionary War battles were also fought near the river's banks.[366] The Hudson also inspired an artistic movement in America and stimulated the birth of a preservationist movement. More recently, it was the site of environmental demonstrations.[367]

The Hudson River School, essentially the first sizable artistic movement in the United States, began in the 1820s. For fifty years, the group documented the landscape in New England and other places across the America. The development of the group hinged around the Hudson River area because the region was very picturesque, and also the opening of the Erie Canal made the Hudson River the main water route between the East Coast and the Middle West, and thus had historical significance.[368] The painters, including Thomas Cole, Washington Allston, and Asher B. Durand, depicted the pristine beauty of America's natural wonders on canvas, and developed a sense of place that was

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[365] John K. Jackson, et al., "Atlantic Coast Rivers of the Northeastern United States," in *Rivers of North America*, ed. Arthur C. Benke (Amsterdam: Elsevier Academic Press, 2005), 35.

[366] For an article discussing the importance of the Hudson River during Revolutionary times, see Gerald C. Stowe and Jac Weller, "Revolutionary West Point: 'The Key to the Continent'," *Military Affairs* 19 (Summer 1955): 81-98.

[367] Simpson is not the only person to highlight the environmental destruction along the Hudson River. Folk-singer Pete Seeger has also been involved with helping to clean the Hudson as well as publicize its present destruction. He co-founded the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater in 1966. The environmental group sails a vessel, named the sloop *Clearwater*, along the Hudson River. Over the years, the group has educated thousands of people about the pollution along the river. According to the Journal of the Water Pollution Control Federation, the environmental group's actions were successful. "Where legislative acts and amendments have failed to bring about significant involvement among those directly affected by the Hudson's water quality, this group, by taking their message directly to the people living and working on the banks of the river, has succeeded." K. Harrington-Hughes, "Clearwater Sails for Cleaner Hudson," *Journal (Water Pollution Control Federation)* 51 (February 1979): 219-23.

[368] John K. Howat, *The Hudson River and Its Painters* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), 28.

uniquely American.[369] Although many Hudson River School paintings depicted vast landscapes, the underlying themes often revolved around discovery, exploration, and settlement.[370]

Over the years, humans have both physically and environmentally altered the Hudson River. In the early nineteenth century, the channel was altered to make the river straighter for navigation and to add railroad lines along the shores. The wetlands were eliminated by 1900; they were consisted "waste" land that could be transformed and used for other purposes. The shores were also compromised in order to make the land more accessible to humans. Certain places along the channel were dredged, filled, or dammed, according to what would best benefit the economy.[371] The changed flow of water altered its hydrology, which caused the plankton population to decline. This changed the natural number of native species of plants and aquatic life in the river. The human introduction of alien species of fish and shellfish changed the river's natural habitat as well.[372]

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[369] Ibid. These artists were the first generation of Hudson River School Painters. The second generation of painters came after Thomas Cole's death in 1848. These included Sanford Robinson Gifford, John Frederick Kensett, and Fredrick Edwin Church, to name a few. American writers, such as Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, also were influential to shape the arts movement in America. See Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy, eds., *Reading American Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

[370] Thomas Cole's *The Oxbow,* (1836) for example, alludes to the change in the landscape made by the encroaching European settlers. The Hudson River flows in an oxbow shape in the center of the image. On the left side, the landscape is wild. Green brush and a haggard tree cover the land. Above, a thunderstorm rages. On the right side of the image, Cole depicts a calm and serene scene. Under a blue sky, fields are cultivated and little houses emerge up from the land. The juxtaposition between the before and after effects of the emigrants is portrayed, which foreshadows the history of the land cultivation along the river. See Jules David Prown, *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), and William H. Truettner and Roger Stein, eds., *Imagining Old New England: Image and Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

[371] Jackson, et. al., 41.

[372] Ibid., 40.

Human intervention also brought industry, which in turn, created pollution downstream. The towns along the Middle Hudson River built many wood mills, which produced lumber, pulp, or paper. Reports show that even as late as 1972, paper waste littered the surface of the water, and the river bottom consisted of a "grayish muck."[373] Although the paper mill and sewage waste has been significantly improved since the early 1970s, other sources of pollution still remain. During the mid-twentieth century, General Electric factories, located in two sites along the Middle Hudson, released 90,000 to 600,000 kilograms of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) into the river.[374] PCB's are odorless and tasteless liquids that do not easily degrade. According to scientific research, the entire Hudson River is now contaminated with PCB's. This results in present fish and ecosystem death, as well as future destruction of the river life if the PCB contamination is not controlled.[375] Along with paper waste and PCB pollution, bacteria infestation from untreated sewage was also prevalent. Around New York City and the Albany-Troy area, the amount of sewage was so high it greatly depleted oxygen levels and consequently, harmed aquatic life.[376]

Countering the pollution, residents have long fought for the preservation of the river. As early as 1894, a "Forever Wild" amendment was added to the state constitution by the New York State legislature.[377] According to the amendment: "The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by

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[373] Ibid., 42.

[374] For a succinct definition of PCBs, see Klaus L. E. Kaiser, "PCB's: How Toxic?" *Science* 192 (May 14, 1976): 614-16.

[375] For a detailed look at the PCB contamination in the Hudson River, see Daniel A. Abramowicz, "Aerobic and Anaerobic PCB Biodegradation in the Environment," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 103 (June 1995): 97-9.

[376] Jackson, et al., 42. The bacteria found was *Sphaerotilus natans.*

[377] Weintraub and Schuckmann, 124.

law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands."[378] This law established the protection of land, timber, soil, and water in the Adirondack region.[379] In 1948, Congress passed the Water Pollution Control Act, which authorized the Public Health Service Surgeon General to "prepare comprehensive programs for eliminating or reducing the pollution of interstate waters and tributaries and improving the sanitary condition of surface and underground waters."[380] Over the decades, many amendments were enacted, including a specific program to "remove PCB's from the Hudson River."[381]

Although this law helped prevent environmental destruction, it did not reverse the damage that had already occurred. The once-pristine river was deemed an "open sewer" in 1960, and in 1983, it was declared the nation's longest Superfund site, identified as such by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) because it was polluted with toxic wastes.[382] The Federal Toxic Release Inventory describes the Hudson River as "the most polluted waterway in New York State."[383]

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[378] This clause still remains in the New York State Constitution. Under Article XIV, Conservation, Chapter 1. It has been amended by vote of the people nine times since 1894, but the exact clause still remains. See http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4960.html.

[379] Weintraub, "Buster Simpson: 'Hudson Headwater Purge' Therapist," unpublished essay.

[380] *Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act),* Public Law 845, *U. S. Code* 33 (1948), § 1155.

[381] *Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act),* Public Law 96-483, *U. S. Code* 33 (1982), § 2360.

[382] The well-documented abuses over the years also consisted of oil tanker leakage, agriculture chemical runoff, factory discharge, raw sewage leaks, and more. See Luz Claudio, "The Hudson: A River Runs through an Environmental Controversy," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110 (April 2002): A184.

[383] Ibid.

Simpson's Response

In order to shed light on a river in need of positive human care and action, Simpson performed *Hudson River Purge* on the Hudson River. Simpson threw limestone "pills" into the Hudson in order to make the community aware of the toxicity of the water. This action was preformed downstream from a manufacturing plant, which once processed molybdenum used in the production of stainless steel.[384] Simpson had two assistants present, but no public witnesses—the site was not sanctioned due to the derelict building. The assistants photographed the performance for the public since the "clandestine" event took place on private property.[385] Simpson chose the site specifically for its history of pollution. He writes,

> [The factory] had been abandoned for several decades, but the whole area was still devoid of life. Containment basins were supposed to prevent the mixing of the contaminated waters with the Hudson, but the condition of the landscape made me doubt the thoroughness of containment.[386]

The work created a metaphor to fix the river's ailments.

The choice of limestone was intentional. For millennia, limestone has been used as a sculptural material. Moreover, it is composed primarily of calcium, the main element used in antacid medicines used to correct over-acidity of the stomach.[387] Similar to the irritants acids cause in the stomach, a low pH of the river water is harmful to aquatic life. The acidity of "pure" rainwater ranges from a pH level of 5.6 to 5.7.[388] According to the

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[384] Weintraub, "Buster Simpson: "Hudson Headwater Purge" Therapist, unpublished essay.

[385] Buster Simpson's letter to author, October 1, 2009.

[386] Ibid.

[387] John C. Kotz and Keith F. Purcell, *Chemistry and Chemical Reactivity* (Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago: Saunders College Publishing, 1987), 46. Limestone is made of calcium carbonate, which is also found in chalk, corals, and sea shells.

[388] Although "pure" water has a pH of 7, the pH of rainwater is lower because it absorbs carbon dioxide from the air. Peter Victor Hobbs, *Introduction to Atmospheric Chemistry: A*

U.S. Geological Survey, the average pH of rainfall in the regions between Ohio and upstate New York was 4.1-4.3.[389] Every whole number on the pH scale increases ten-fold; thus, the average acidity of rain was over ten times greater than normal.[390] Even at a pH level of 5.5, bottom-thriving bacteria cannot survive. A pH of 4.5 kills fish and some amphibians.[391]

Simpson's addition of limestone was thus meant to literally and metaphorically "sweeten" the pH of the river, making the water less acidic resulting in less toxic waters for people and wild life. The practice of using limestone to decrease the acidity is called "liming" and was once used by environmental engineers.[392] As Simpson said, "When I started this piece, the Army Corps of Engineers was flying over lakes in helicopters and dosing streams with limestone slurry."[393] Today, this remedy is rarely used in the United States due to its expense and the need for the limestone to be often applied in order to be effective; however, countries in Scandinavia still employ this method for restoring acidic rivers and lakes.[394]

Companion Text to Basic Physical Chemistry for the Atmospheric Sciences (Cambridge, MA, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 135.

[389] See the United States Geological Survey website at: http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/acidrain/2.html.

[390] Gerry L. Mackie, *Applied Aquatic Ecosystem Concepts* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall and Hunt, 2004), 579.

[391] Rashid M. Hassan, Robert Scholes, and Neville Ash, *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005), 428. Also cited in Weintraub and Schuckmann, 123.

[392] Martin Sondergaard, "Chemical Treatment of Water and Sediments with Special Reference to Lakes," in *Handbook of Ecological Restoration*, ed. Martin Richard Perrow and Anthony J. Davy (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 199-200.

[393] Interview with Simpson by Linda Weintraub, on August 21, 2005. In Weintraub and Schuckmann, 124.

[394] Gunnar G. Readdum and Arne Fjellheim, "Liming of River Audna, Sothern Norway: A Large-Scale Experiment of Benthic Invertebrate Recovery," *A Journal of the Human Environment* 32 (March 2003): 230-34. Also see Per K. Egeberg and John T. Håkedal, "The

Broadcasting the Hudson's Plight

Simpson was well aware that his work would not provide a practical solution to the acidity problems of the river; instead, his *Hudson Headwaters Purge* served to publicize an obvious environmental problem and thus helped to educate the public about local ecological condition.[395] Because it was a performance, it caught the attention of the local media (who affectionately called the work "River Rolaids" and "Tums for Mother Nature"), as well as scholars, who highlighted the disturbing details about the river's plight (fig. 41).[396] Simpson's work also appeared in newspapers around the country and main-stream magazines. Because the performance was publicized in popular media, the work reached a different audience than scientific journals, which can publish dense details about the river's ecological status. Because Simpson's performance uses a visual element, his work can resonate throughout a much larger population.

Instead of providing only a scientific explanation for his audience, he used humor and visual aids to communicate his message:

> I use humor. It is disarming. There are those who don't want to believe there is such a thing as acid rain. Humor helps them relax and let the information come in. The media helped me to get an idea out to the general public, rather than keep it within white-walled thinking. These phrases helped make my work accessible—simple enough to be spoon fed and easily digested.[397]

Effect of River Liming on the Trace Metal Budgets of a Down Stream Lake," *Water, Air and Soil Pollution* 104 (November 2004): 57-75. This was also noted in Weintraub and Schuckmann, 124.

[395] Spaid, 92.

[396] In 1983, Simpson created a very similar performance in which he placed limestone disks in Seattle's water system. This was publicized in Jennifer Maxwell, "New Notes," *Esquire*, November 1983, 226; photograph by Roger Schreiber; and Eric Mishara, "River Rolaids," *Omni* 6 (July 1984): 37. Both of these articles used the terms "River Rolaids" and "Tums for Mother Nature." When he performed *Hudson River Purge,* those nicknames were used for this work as well.

[397] Linda Weintraub's interview with the artist, August 21, 2005. In, Weintraub and Schuckmann, 123.

As Eco-Art scholar Linda Weintraub claims, this work is comparable to the affect on the stomach after eating a meal of spicy food.[398] Overly acidic stomachs cause indigestion; acidic rivers cause damage as well. As Weintraub explains, the simplest way to ease indigestion is not to mask the issue with medication, but instead to change diets.[399] By cleaning up the Hudson River, the "River Rolaids" will no longer be needed. This "easily digested" metaphor is accessible to adults and children, environmental friends or foes, as well as the erudite or the pop-culture addicts. This work was not created to reside behind glass in a museum, or be sold to a high-paying patron at a gallery. Simpson created the sculpture as visual aid to see the damage pollution can cause in the Hudson River and to provide an approach to help cure the river of its ailments.

Several years later, an image of the dissolved limestone disks proves the toxic river's effect on the objects (fig. 42). Over time, the acidic river carved divots into the limestone. The affect of the polluted Hudson River is overtly apparent in Simpson's sculpture: if the toxic water can carve stone, what then does it do to aquatic life? By publicizing a visual litmus test, seen with the water's effect on limestone over time, Simpson's Eco-Art provides an educational lesson to the community at hand.

Simpson's placing of the lozenges, and the effects of the river on the tablets over time, are symbols of ecological restoration. Simpson's work is not an *answer* to the ecological problems of the Hudson River, instead it is an educational metaphor. The work may be small in scale, but the piece helped the river more than any static limestone statue could hope to accomplish. Simpson's art highlighted the Hudson River's fragility and exhorted citizens to do something to heal the river. By creating work in the public realm, he hoped to educate the public about the need for environmental reform.

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[398] Ibid.

[399] Ibid.

Host Analog (1991)

Another example of Simpson's educational Eco-Art is his 1991 sculpture entitled *Host Analog* (fig. 43). Commissioned by the Portland Convention Center in Oregon, Simpson's sculpture consists of a decaying log, cut into eight segments. Seedlings, which came from an Oregon forest, now sprout from the trunk. To help the new growth, Simpson added an irrigation system that mists the saplings.[400] Today, the log sprouts trees native to the forest, such as Western red cedars, hemlocks, and Douglass firs. Seeds that grow in drier climates such as grasses, oaks, and field plants also thrive, as well as vegetation that likes sunny and wet sites, such as horsetails, cottonwoods, and willows.[401] Simpson's goal was to generate a forest from one fallen eighty-foot Douglass Fir tree. As stated on one sign-post in front of the log segments:

> The intent of the piece is to introduce into the urban landscape an indigenous natural phenomena known as a host, or nursing log. This piece is about a real-time, accommodating landscape, which hosts the notion of metaphorical history and the measurements of time with concurrent events that affects the host log's regeneration.[402]

The sculptural significance of the tree is the growth that continues on the dead wood. The installation provides a visual example of the slow cycle of life.

In the 1960s, the tree fell naturally after a windstorm in the Bull Run watershed, which is the city of Portland's water source located within the Mount Hood National Forest. Deemed unsuitable for lumber, the tree lay prostrate on the ground until the 1990s.[403] Simpson found the decaying tree and moved the massive log to Portland. He

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[400] Matilsky, 95.

[401] Paul Kelsch, "Constructions of American Forest: Four Landscapes, Four Readings," in *Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 171.

[402] See Figure 14.

[403] Buster Simpson's unpublished artist's statement.

cut it into eight, eight-foot long sections and arranged the segments on crushed volcanic rock in the public space.[404]

Due to the work's prominent location—near the front doors of the convention center and right in the middle of the city of Portland—the sculpture is accessible to many. The 225,000 square-foot convention center contains fifty meeting rooms. The hundreds of functions scheduled at the center bring thousands of both city-dwelling and rural living residents past the work.[405] The accessibility of the sculpture is not only for convention center patrons—on an average week-day in June, Portland residents were eating lunch on nearby benches, reading books, and enjoying the public space surrounding the sculpture.[406] Positioned right in the middle of a plaza surrounded by other public works, terraced vegetation, trees, and sidewalks, Simpson's sculpture is the featured work in the area.

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[404] Mark Dion also created an installation that involved a fallen tree, called *Neukom Vivarium*, in 2006. The work was created for the Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle. Simpson's *Host Analog*, created fifteen years prior to Dion's *Neukom Vivarium*, differs greatly in concept. Whereas Simpson's work is meant to be exposed to the elements and change throughout time, Dion's log was placed in a built environment: a vivarium. This artificial environment contains a sprinkler system that sprays the amount of water the log would normally receive in the forest, and the windows also open and close automatically in relation to the inside temperature. I visited Dion's *Neukom Vivarium* with Simpson while I was in Seattle in June of 2009. In response to my question about how he perceived Dion's work, Simpson said, "I think that people misread those two pieces of being of the same thing. His thing could be a log or it could be anything—it could be of the pressures of museums collecting things or containing it, enclosing it, possessing it, possessing nature. And how much it costs to maintain that fetish . . . . My other concern was that it was a very expensive piece. Which is okay, but it should have been located downtown next to one of the citadels of capitalism, that would have been much more appropriately contexted in that type of place than say, in the Sylvan landscape, where we already have lots of trees and nature." Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[405] According to their website, their staff can handle events "of any size, from 10 to 10,000." See: http://www.oregoncc.org/.

[406] I witnessed this on June 22, 2009, while visiting the work in person.

Didactic Function of *Host Analog*

Simpson uses the tree as a didactic tool, and the community he is educating is both local and global. Community, to Simpson, is "everywhere."[407] Thus, community could be urban professionals who have never walked through a pine forest, or rural folks who watch logging companies take their trees off nearby land. The community could also include the loggers themselves, corporate executives who profit from logging, and even the tree-hugging environmentalists. Through Simpson's sculpture, Portland residents and tourists alike, regardless of background, can learn about the effects of deforestation through this installation.

The climate of the Pacific Northwest is very conducive to tree growth. The state of Oregon alone boasts eleven national forests; the Pacific Northwest contains many more.[408] Despite their ecological importance, Pacific Northwest forests provide most of the building lumber and a large amount of paper pulp for the United States as well as exports to Asia.[409] Along with the logging industry's tangible goods, they have also provided thousands of jobs over the last century to help Oregon and Washington's economy.[410] However, as Edward O. Wilson, biologist at Harvard University, noted,

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[407] Conversation and interview with artist, June 26, 2009. The whole quote is: "Big city people have community, [although] sometimes it's more vertical than horizontal. I think communities are everywhere. Some people's communities are more by profession than physical location."

[408] Those forests are: Deschutes National Forest, Fremont-Winema National Forest, Malheur National Forest, Mt. Hood National Forest, Ochoco National Forest, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Siuslaw National Forest, Umatilla National Forest, Umpqua National Forest, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, and Willamette National Forest. For more information, James K. Agee, *Fire Ecology of Pacific Northwest Forests* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1996).

[409] Lydia Mihelic Pulsipher, Alex Pulsipher, and Holly M. Hapke, *World Regional Geography: Global Patterns, Local Lives*, 4th ed. (New York: W. H. Freeman, 2008), 109.

[410] A book that analyzes the history and promotes the importance of logging is James LeMonds, *Deadfall: Generations of Logging in the Pacific Northwest* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press, 2001).

> The worst thing that can happen—will happen—is not energy depletion, economic collapse, limited nuclear war, or conquest by a totalitarian government. As terrible as these catastrophes would be for us, they can be repaired within a few generations. The one process ongoing in the 1980s that will take millions of years to correct is the loss of genetic and species diversity by the destruction of natural habitats. This is the folly our descendants are least likely to forgive us.[411]

Logging affects the ecology, the water flow, and the geographical formation of land.[412] The Pacific Northwest is not the only region affected by deforestation; the Amazon Rainforest in Brazil, the Congo in Central Africa, Indonesia, Eastern Europe, and many more forested areas around the planet are being logged at impressive rates.

Simpson's installation provides an accessible and easily digestible example of the rate of vegetative growth in a forest. Sapling growth is incredibly slow—seedlings grow at a rate of one foot every five to ten years. In forests, it truly is easy to miss the forest for the trees in terms of understanding the length of time and perfect conditions it takes to grow verdant life. Because this log has been taken out of the context of the forest where it once lay, the slow rate of growth is now highlighted through the growth on the logs.

Educational Signposts

The aspect of time is also noted through the signage around the installation. Five signposts line the front of the installation. Each sign is nearly three feet high, and has a light fixture that illuminates the information on the sign at night. The signs educate the viewer about five different aspects of forest life: the human impact on the environment, the continuation of life, the importance of trees in a forest, the human impact on the land, and the path of water from Mt. Hood to the Portland water system.

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411 Edward O. Wilson, "Resolutions for the 80s," *Harvard Magazine* 82 (January-February 1980): 20.

412 Elliott A. Norse, *Ancient Forests of the Pacific Northwest* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1989), 208. An article which analyzes how to manage forest ecosystems is: F. J. Swanson and J. F. Franklin, "New Forestry Principles from Ecosystem Analysis of Pacific Northwest Forests," *Ecological Applications* 2 (August 1992): 262-74.

The first sign begins, "*Host Analog* is evolving into a laboratory where natural phenomena have been transported into a new urban context."[413] Along with the inscription, three distinct images mimic each other in their iconography, but not in reality (fig. 44). The first image depicts a pine tree branch dipping its needles into water. The touch of the branch makes concentric ripples that extend to the edge of the image. Underneath this is a fingerprint. The last image is a tree trunk; the rings of the dead tree are visible. All three images show circles that move outward: the ripples in water, the individual curves of a fingerprint, and the rings of a tree. These simple circles represent the larger impact that humans could have on an ecosystem or forest.

The second signpost includes three images; all symbolize the continuation of life (fig 45). The first photograph introduces the artwork as a work in progress. Simpson includes a photograph that depicts the installation in 1991—the logs are mere stumps placed in an arch underneath the irrigation pipes (fig. 46). Tiny spouts are evident, but the logs are the dominant feature. Simpson's daughter, a small girl at the time, stands next to a naked log. Although the image is taken of the exact installation in front of the viewer, this photograph proves what a difference time makes in a forest.[414]

An image in the middle of the same signpost depicts an undated, but older photograph of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece (fig. 47). One tall column stands in the left of the image, while another column lays in pieces to the right. The columns can be seen as symbolic of trees. The fallen column is split into many segments—it is evident

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[413] The writing continues: "Gleaned from the Bull Run watershed in 1991, this host log arrived at the Oregon Convention Center with a mix of micro-organisms, fungi, and plants attached to the decaying biomass of an old growth Douglas Fir windfall. Now the monarch is laying host to a diversity of indigenous and non-native plants and trees, propagated by chance conditions. The nurse log is an urban metaphor for accommodation and collaboration. Perhaps at this location *Host Analog* will remain undisturbed for the thousand years required to complete the regenerative cycle."

[414] The text accompanying the image is recorded above.

that the Greeks stacked circular drums on top of each other in order to create the column. The fallen column lies along the ground. The text beneath the image reads:

> The manner in which a fallen tree comes to rest on the forest floor greatly influences subsequent diversity of both external and internal plant and animal habitats. The decomposing fallen tree provides a changing spectrum of habitats over many decades—even centuries. It provides diversity within a given succession stage and forms a physical-chemical link through the many successional stages of a forest.[415]

The final image on the signpost compares the fallen temple column to a fallen tree in a forest (fig. 48). The undated image is titled, "A Hundred or So Lumber Jacks Sit Down to a Meal at Two Long Tables in the Woods." The photograph records numerous men eating a meal on two picnic tables apparently made from one log. Surrounding the men are massive trees on all sides.

All three images on this signpost, segmented *Host Analog,* a fallen column, and a fallen tree show metaphorical skeletons, the remains of past lives. Life, however, does not end with the fall of the mighty. As the text on the sign explains, life always continues. The early image of *Host Analog* proves the change in the installation's growth over time. The photograph of the temple ruins also captured the growth of Athens in the background. Buildings seem to sprout up out of the fallen column. In the final image, the loggers sit at a picnic table impressive in both size and structure. Although the table is not giving life in the same manner that the *Host Analog* sprouts seeds, the log now functions as a table, which allows for the sharing of meals and nourishment for the men that work in the forest. The men who eat at the log table, ironically, are the men who also log the forest. This juxtaposition shows both sides of the story—men eating among and upon magnificent pines, but also using these trees to make a living so they can bring food to their table.

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[415] See Figure 15.

The third signpost sheds light on the importance of trees in a forest. The text reads:

> Wood appears to facilitate colonization by long-lived decomposer and mycorrhizal fungi that capture nutrients, such as nitrogen, within a chemical matrix that promotes nitrogen retention. A slow-release nitrogen system operates in coarse woody debris because nitrogen has the potential for becoming available for plant growth at higher C:N ratios than in typical agricultural residues. Other beneficial properties of large, fallen trees in forests include high water-holding capacity and cation-exchange capacity, and habitat for micro-organisms, invertebrates, vertebrates, and higher plants.[416]

The two images of wood flank the text (fig. 49). The top photograph depicts "Urban Woodman," Simpson's alter-ego he created in the early 1980s.[417] This character often took the form of a crudely shaped man, carrying a woodpile on his back. Simpson originally created this to highlight the displacement of the homeless in Seattle during the gentrification of certain neighborhoods. In the Belltown neighborhood, in particular, developers were demolishing single-room-occupancy hotels to make way for new condominiums and high-rise buildings.[418] To represent the demolishing of the old to make way for the new, Urban Woodman was photographed carrying the boards of the buildings slated for destruction on his back.[419]

On the bottom of the same signpost, another photograph documents two massive logs. One log, eight feet across, fell centuries ago. The photographer counted the rings

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[416] See Figure 17. In Simpson's signage, he cited ecological scholars such as James Trappe and Chris Maser. For newer publications from these scholars, see Chris Maser, Andrew W. Claridge, and James Trappe, *Trees, Truffles, and Beasts: How Forests Function* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

[417] Marcel Duchamp was one of the first artists to invent an alter-ego and document it in writing and photographs. For more information, see Marcel Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp,* Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989).

[418] Matthew Kangas, "Buster Simpson: Green Interventions," *Sculpture* 22 (December 2003): 40.

[419] Ibid.

and noted on the image that the tree must have been 2,000 years old when it fell. Another tree, eleven feet across, grew over the ancient tree. A man sits on its stump. The tree he sits upon is recorded to be 2,500 years old. Thus, this one photograph documents 4,500 years in the history of two trees. Comparing the two images and the text, it becomes clear that the wood has the importance of capturing nutrients, of symbolizing a home, and of documenting time.

The fourth sign-post has two vertical images that remind viewers of their impact on the land. The top image is an antique photograph of the Bureau Water Works Monitoring Station, and the bottom photograph depicts two boys fishing into the Portland Sewer Outflow dating to 1960 (figs. 50 and 51). The image of the monitoring station shows two crank telephones and two recording devices. However, the scene appears quiet; the phones are not ringing and the monitors seem still. The image appears as if nobody is monitoring Portland's water. The boys in the lower photograph seem oblivious to the fact that they are fishing in sewage. Between these two images, the sign reads:

> As a fallen tree decomposes, it creates a gradually changing myriad of internal and external habits. Plant and animal communities within a fallen tree are very different from those outside, but both progress through a series of orderly changes. As a fallen tree decomposes, its internal structure becomes simpler, whereas the structure of the plant community surrounding the fallen tree becomes more complex. (see fig. 18)

Although this text responds to the natural decomposition of trees in a forest, the images depict the neglect of maintaining natural ecological processes.

The fifth and final signpost illustrates the path of water from Mount Hood to the Willamette River and finally to the Portland Water Works storage facility. Simpson positioned a drawing of Mount Hood at the top of the post. Underneath is a photograph of snowmelt on the mountain (fig. 52). The middle of the post contains drawings that represent the Portland Water Supply System. Dams, reservoirs, tanks, and pumps are all interconnected with pipes. One long pipe continues down the image. Behind it is an upside-down photograph of the "largest known Douglas Fir, Diam. 14 feet," as it explains

in the image (fig. 53). The illustration of the pipe continues to the bottom of the post. It appears to flow into the Willamette River and then into the West Side tanks and pumps. The image at the very bottom portrays metal covers in the sidewalks, inscribed with "Portland Water Works." Water, as this signpost illustrates, travels through many man-made and natural paths before it reaches the city.

Host Analog's Agenda: Ecological and Educational Interconnection

This interconnectedness between the forest, trees, and water, is symbolized by a simple inclusion of a drinking fountain, positioned across from the last signpost (fig. 54). The pipes that bring snowmelt from Mount Hood and into Portland's holding tanks also provide irrigation for the plants and quench the thirst of the people who visit the site. The fountain, however, does not just blend into the surroundings. Instead of a typical drinking fountain, Simpson attached a bowl with a human fingerprint printed on it. This symbol, with its swirling lines, is a bold reminder of the human imprint on the land. The people of the Pacific Northwest prize their coniferous forests, yet these same forests are ravaged by the timber industry. Although this particular tree fell naturally, many do not. With a swift swipe of the saw, a hundred-year-old tree can be cut down.[420] The fragility of the forest is shown in both the signposts' photographs and the living sculpture. In his installation, Simpson condenses complex natural processes into small, easily digested ideas.

The title, *Host Analog,* conveys its educational purpose. The viewers who visit the site can, over time, watch the host log's new growth. The log becomes an analog for the forest, or a "mechanism that represents data by measurement of a continuous physical

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[420] For information about how logging, deforestation, and clear-cutting affect forests, see Daniel D. Chiras, *Environmental Science: Creating a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Jones and Bartlett, 2004), 257-59.

variable."[421] By reading the text and examining the images on the signposts, as well as noticing the change in the growth on the logs over time, an audience can extrapolate ecological information and come to their own conclusions about how to view a forest. By allowing the public to access the forest in the city, Simpson makes Portland residents, tourists, and conference center patrons aware of the growth and decomposition of trees. This work promotes an understanding of deforestation and advocates for taking care of the remaining pine forests in the Pacific Northwest.

Monolith

The last example, *Monolith* (2005), is an installation in Redding, California, that pays homage to the labor and materials that were used to create Shasta Dam while simultaneously revealing the dam's impact on the earth (fig. 55). Simpson's installation, placed within Turtle Bay Exploration Park, provides a direct tie to the community. Because it is located within a park, the work is accessible for families, local residents, and tourists. Moreover, Simpson created the installation in and around the shell of the Kutras Aggregate Plant, which processed the gravel used to make the concrete for the Shasta Dam. By creating an artistic installation within the antiquated ruins of an industrial building, Simpson breathed new life into a structure that would be used for educational purposes.[422] His installations, which make up the Monolith project, highlight the geological aspects of the different rocks that were used, the green life that now grows around the lake, and even the wildlife that now surrounds the *Monolith.* This work promotes a sense of pride for the community that brought this dam into fruition, while also reminding visitors of the consequences of manipulating nature.

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421 *Webster's Eleventh New Collegiate Dictionary,* s.v. "analog."

422 A good theoretical book that mirrors *Monolith's* message is Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Marx's book analyzes the effects of technological advancements (the machine) in nature (the garden).

A "Process of Discovery and Exploration"

Proclaimed as a "proud partner in our community," the Turtle Bay Exploration Park contains a museum with interactive scientific exhibits, an arboretum and botanical garden, a Sundial Bridge that connects the park with Sacramento's River Trail system, and Paul Bunyon's Forest Camp, designed to teach children about ecology.[423] Simpson's didactic installations fit well with the philosophy of Turtle Bay Park. According to their website, Turtle Bay selected Simpson to create an installation because he was "internationally known for the 'poetic utility' and ecological sensitivity of his public art installations."[424] In Simpson's artist statement for *Monolith*, he says:

> The Monolith serves as a significant counterbalance to the elegant dam it helped to build. Telling the story of this place aesthetically allows a process of discovery and investigation for visitors that complement the experience of the space.[425]

Teaching both children and adults, Simpson's installation highlights the positive and negative aspects of Shasta Dam. Because he incorporates history and ecology into an otherwise dead and forgotten site, this installation is a reminder of the changes that have been made to the nearby landscape.

History of Shasta Dam

Shasta Dam, created from one continuous pour of concrete, was considered a great engineering feat in its day (fig. 56). Created between 1938 and 1945, the dam was the hub of the Central Valley Project (CVP), a United States Bureau of Reclamation project that built twenty dams, eleven hydroelectric plants, and five hundred miles of

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[423] Just in the summer of 2009, the exhibitions at Turtle Bay Park included "A T. Rex named Sue," as well as an aviary and garden exhibit entitled, "Wings of Summer: Birds! and Butterflies!" The exhibits are designed to teach children about nature, fossils, and the surrounding environment. See more on Turtle Bay Exploration Park's website: http://www.turtlebay.org.

[424] Ibid.

[425] Buster Simpson, "Monolith," Artist's statement, 2005.

canals and aqueducts.[426] Due to the erratic rainfall in Northern California, the CVP was created in 1933 in order to control the Sacramento River floods and to bring water to the arid San Joaquin Valley.[427] The dam created Shasta Lake, a 29,500 acre body of water that has a 365 mile circumference at maximum capacity.[428] 602 feet high and 3,460 feet across, it is the second longest dam in the United States.[429]

Located near Shasta Dam, the Aggregate Processing Plant took raw materials from the deposits gathered from the Sacramento River, and converted the materials into sand and gravel. The plant, with its staggering nine-and-a-half-mile conveyor belt (the largest conveyor belt in the world in the 1940s) converted ten million tons of sand into six million square yards of concrete for the construction of the dam.[430] The dam submerged the canyons of the Pit River and the Sacramento River. This caused alterations not only to the landscape, but also to the ecology. The conditions in the water changed, causing fish populations to decrease and fish migration patterns to change.[431]

Not only did the creation of the dam greatly affect the land and ecology surrounding the flooded areas, it also affected the people. The Winnemen Wintu, a Native American tribe indigenous to the area south of Redding, California, historically held

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[426] For more information, see the publication put out by the Shasta Dam constructors: *Shasta Dam and its Builders* (San Francisco: Pacific Constructors, 1945).

[427] Eric A. Stene, *Central Valley Project: Shasta Division* (Denver, CO: Bureau of Reclamation History Project, 1994), 1.

[428] John O. Sawyer, *Northwest California: A Natural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), 7.

[429] The only other dam longer than the Shasta Dam is the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State. The Hoover Dam is taller than the Shasta Dam, but not as long.

[430] This information came from Simpson's documented research. He found a 1940s postcard of the aggregate plant which shows an illustration of the dam being created. On the back of the postcard, the statistics given above are documented. The postcard claims the conveyer belt was twelve miles long, but other sources claim it to be nine-and-a-half miles.

[431] Sawyer, 132.

lands that bordered the McCloud River, which flows into Lake Shasta. Numbering 14,000 in the eighteenth century, the Winnemen Wintu population decreased by half in the nineteenth century due to disease. Today, their population numbers 125.[432]

The construction of Shasta Dam flooded nearly 4,000 acres of their ancestral land and sacred burial grounds. Before the dam swallowed up their land, the tribe exhumed 183 ancestors, and moved their remains to higher ground.[433] The tribe is currently filing a law suit against six federal agencies for past compensation, but more important, to stop the planned addition to the dam, which could flood twenty more sacred sites along the McCloud River.[434]

For federal agencies and local citizens, however, the fresh water and energy enabled by the dam was worth the cost. Due to California's dense population, the dam produces electricity for twenty-two million people in the region. [435] The dam also provides water for farmers. Seen as a "faucet for irrigation," the dam raised the Sacramento River enough to form two canals.[436] The Contra Costa Channel and the

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[432] Jacques Leslie, "Six-Hundred Feet and Rising," *On Earth: Environmental Politics* 28 (Summer 2008): 22. The author notes, "The [Winnemen] are so close to extinction that if they were an animal species, they'd be listed as endangered."

[433] Dean E. Murphy, "At War Against Dam, Tribe Turns to Old Ways," *New York Times,* September 14, 2004, A16.

[434] The Winnemen Wintus are filing suit against the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. For a complete look at the hearings and for a history of the Winnemen Wintu peoples, see Mark Franco and Caleen Sisk-Franco's article prepared for the Senate Select Committee Hearings in Washington, D.C., on June 4, 2002: http://indian.senate.gov.

[435] These statistics come from the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation website. See: http://www.usbr.gov.

[436] Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 240.Worster does mention the negative affects of the dam, stating, "The point to that exercise in technical virtuosity was to re-create the river that farmers and the Bureau were elsewhere destroying . . . "

Delta-Mendota Canal restored water to the arid farmland.[437] The colossal concrete structure simultaneously helps and harms the people and the land; thus Simpson's installation portrays this complexity.

The Aesthetics of the Monolith

Simpson created an art installation that highlights the dam's power over the ecosystem and its effect on native peoples. Nicknamed "the Monolith," it juxtaposed the glory that came from creating one of the nation's largest dams and the ecological consequences of progress.

Following the walking path to the front of the *Monolith*, Simpson placed a small monument in front of the building (fig. 57). The monument is a sculpture that introduces the installation that the visitor is about to enter. The sculpture, in Simpson's words, "sets reference points in time and establishes the significance of this site."[438] A small depiction of the aggregate plant is cast in bronze and is positioned on an original concrete pier. On opposing sides, written words describe the past function of the building. "Kutras Tract Aggregate Plant 1938-1944" is inscribed and highlighted with gold leaf on one side. On the other, the text reads: "Turtle Bay—1942. At this oxbow of the Sacramento River, velocities slow, gravel gathers. Twelve yard buckets amass to dam the relentless aggregation." On the pier, Simpson attached photographs that document the change in the landscape before and after the addition of the dam.[439] From the first detail of the installation, it is apparent that Simpson's sculpture pays heed to the labor-intensive building of the dam, but, more importantly, it remembers the river.

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[437] Ibid.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Along with the images, Simpson also attached the names of people that gave money to the *Monolith* project.

The Sacramento River, which once flowed near the plant, flooded the site right before it began operation in 1940. In order to commemorate this natural event that no longer occurs, Simpson painted the high water level around the entire building as a "last hurrah" of the river.[440] Simpson used the red silt from the Sacramento River valley as the paint. Because the dam was put in place to stop the occurrence of high waters, this mark is a reminder of the important ecological function of floods, which no longer occur.[441]

Also surrounding the building are piles of rocks (fig. 57). This raked gravel represents the gravel used by the plant to make concrete. A bucket is placed atop one of the piles to symbolize the laborious process of dredging, sorting, and crushing rocks.[442] The cone-shaped rock piles resemble sand dunes when seen from inside the building. The symbolism of the gravel pits represent not only the materials used to make the dam, but also the impermeability of the materials used. The rock piles are sculptural, yet barren. Over time, because the piles are made of rocks, they will not grow and flourish, like vegetation or rivers—instead, the rock piles will erode.

Upon entering the building, the first space is entitled the *One Cubic Yard Room* (fig. 58).[443] The room contains numerous installations. A sculpture, *One Cubic Yard,* sits in the middle of the room. The sculpture is made of one cubic yard of cement, as the title suggests, with inscribed words defining the material. "One Cubic Yard," is on one side of

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[440] Interview with artist, June 26, 2009.

[441] Buster Simpson's unpublished artist's statement.

[442] Ibid.

[443] Simpson may be referring here to Walter de Maria's or *Earth Art Room* in which de Maria filled a gallery with two feet of potting soil in 1968. This work led to his notorious *New York Earth Room* in 1977, in which De Maria also filled a New York City gallery with two feet of dirt. See Boettger, 116-18.

the cube, and a list of "What's in a Cubic Yard of Concrete?" is written on the other.[444] The third side states: "The making of Shasta Dam required enough concrete to build a 3-foot wide sidewalk around the world at the equator." On the opposing side, it reads: "Between 1940 and 1945, 12,200,000 tons of sand and gravel were quarried here to created 6,000,000 cubic yards of concrete to make Shasta Dam." The top of the cube contains various rocks gathered from the Sacramento River oxbow (fig. 59). The polished rocks are identified by name. Rocks such as white quartz, granite, greenstone, and fine-grained granite, are labeled directly onto the rocks.[445]

The walls around the room contain other objects made by Simpson. A framed porcelain-enameled reproduction of the Geologic Watershed of the Sacramento River hangs on one of the concrete walls. In the same room hangs another image of a framed sixteenth-century engraving, which depicts an early aggregate assembly line (fig. 60).[446] The image shows people sorting through baskets of pulverized rocks as the materials make their way to buckets of water. The different mechanisms are identified by letter in the key at the bottom of the image.[447] The landscape depicted in the background of the

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[444] Under the words, "What's in a Cubic Yard of Concrete," Simpson added: "1 barrel of cement, 1.75 wheelbarrow loads of sand, 2.25 wheelbarrow loads of pea-gravel, 2.5 wheelbarrow loads of medium gravel, 2.25 wheelbarrow loads of coarse gravel, 2.25 wheelbarrow loads of cobbles, 15 gallons of water." Simpson, "Monolith," artist's statement.

[445] The full list of identified rocks are: greenstone, altered andesite, granite, white quartz, chert pebble conglomerate, fine-grained granite, chert breccia with quartz and epidote veins, conglomerate, andesite, greenstone with quartz vein, silicified chert breccia, dacite, chert breccia, chert, concretion in sandstone, silicified siltstone, bedded sandstone and siltstone, scoria, and hornblende gabbro. Simpson, "Monolith," artist's statement.

[446] The frames around the image of the Geologic Watershed of the Sacramento River and the sixteenth-century engraving are both made by Simpson. About ten years prior, engineers cored a section of the dam for running conduit. Simpson took the cores, sawed them in half, and used them to insert into the frames. As Simpson claimed, "this rock has really made a two way trip. It was from [the Kutras Aggregate Plant,] it went up to the dam, and it came back down again." Interview with Simpson, on June 26, 2009.

[447] Simpson, "Monolith," artist's statement.

engraving shows barren land and rocks scattered throughout the scene. The juxtaposition of an antiquated assembly line, compared to a modern one, shows little difference between those that manipulate the earth.

In the One Cubic Yard room, an adjacent wall contains one of four pairs of doors, called the *Doors of Aggregation.* All four pairs of the doors are made of steel mesh, and are three feet wide by six or seven feet tall (fig. 61). The first doors contain photographs, made from porcelain-enamel panels, which depict ten historic photographs documenting the Shasta Dam. On the back side of the doors hang ten more images; all show the aggregation process and the extraction of materials from the river. Samples of the labeled rocks were photographed in organized boxes.[448] The second pair of doors depicts historic photographs, which document the process of grading and gathering the aggregates (fig. 62). These images are juxtaposed with the aforementioned engraving from the sixteenth-century image. As Simpson notes, "Fundamentally little has changed in the past five-hundred years, as these documents reveal. Other than the machinery replacing manual labor, it is still a process of sorting, washing, and crushing."[449]

Walking through a set of the doors, a memorial to the workers at the plant, entitled *Laborers' Offering to the Water Safe,* is positioned in another section of the building (fig. 63). The memorial contains thirty hard hats—the McDonald "T" hardhat once worn by the workers at the Shasta Dam and the aggregate plant—that are all cast in aluminum. The hats all face upwards and are connected to each other by a metal pipe. The stack of hats extends thirty feet into the air. Water runs up the pipe, and flows into one up-turned hat.[450] Once that hat has been filled, it drips over the sides into the hat

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[448] Ibid.

[449] Ibid.

[450] In our interview on June 26, 2009, Simpson informed me that the fountain is currently turned off. He is currently thinking of a way in which the water can be recycled, and the fountain will run again.

beneath it. The last container is a gold-lined bucket that catches the falling water. The bucket sits in the old company safe, which has been turned on its side. As Simpson states, "The gold-lined bucket and the old company safe suggest the relationship of water with value, in both commerce and ecology. The water feature creates an audible experience like a cascading river with bell overtones."[451] Simpson's sculpture illuminates this natural substance—water—which became a commodity in Northern California in the eyes of man.

All four sides of the Monolith once contained the footing for the rock crusher for the aggregate plant. A large machine pulverized the rocks into smaller stones used to make concrete. In place of the machine, there is now a footbridge, which contains a misting system. The misting system is put in place in order to nurture small plants that grow on the side of the building. The lichens and moss that can live on bare surfaces are symbolic in two ways. In one way, because lichens and moss can physically alter the materials over time, Simpson claims that the growth is "a rock crusher on a microscopic scale."[452] On a larger scale, the green wall of growth also represents Mossbrae Falls, a site along the Sacramento River.

The space also serves as a retention basin, which holds water like a cistern after a large rain. The water from the *Laborers' Offering to the Water Safe* sculpture also is pumped into the detention basin. The retained water is able to move in and out of the area depending on the levels of water elsewhere. If the water flow is normal, the water is contained in the pit. If the water level is already high, however, water is directed into a naturally mud-filled detention, and then into the Turtle Bay wetlands.[453] Simpson titled

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[451] Simpson, "Monolith," artist's statement.

[452] Ibid.

[453] Ibid.

the muddy basin the *Swallow Mud Bowl* due to the gathering of swallows. The wet earth is used by the swallows to build nests, which they do in and around the *Monolith.* As the building once used wet cement in order to build Shasta dam, the swallows use wet earth to build nests.[454]

The installation as a whole represents the delicate balance between human control and natural life. Although the aggregate plant created the concrete for the dam in hopes of creating agricultural land, energy, and fresh water for consumption, the conversion comes at a price. By highlighting simple entities, such as swallows, who make their nests in the concrete structure, and water, which follows a path down upturned hard-hats, Simpson educates those who come to the park about the effects humans have on the earth.

Conclusion

Simpson's works contain messages about the fragility of the planet. Manifested in different media—ceramic sculptures, performances, and installations—Simpson's Eco-Art has a didactic function. Unlike scientific data and statistics, his works are *visual.* They provide perspective and promote an important ecological message. Simpson teaches viewers about the environment in which they live.

For the series, *When the Tide is Out the Table is Full,* Simpson showed visitors in museums the toxins in the water through stains on ceramic sculptures. Even if the eye cannot see the detrimental effects of polluted rivers, those effects are there. By firing pottery "glazed" by toxins, Simpson makes the pollution in water visible. His performance of the *Hudson River Purge* not only showed the effects of polluted water on the environment, it provided a preventative solution. Even though it only "healed" a small section of the Hudson, the performance made national headlines. The sculpture, *Host Analog,* provides a similar lesson, but this time, in terms of promoting healthy

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[454] Ibid. The birds also provide insect control in the area.

forests. By bringing a fallen tree to the Portland city center, visitors and residents can witness the slow growth of a forest. They can examine the life on one log—saplings have now turned into trees and a carpet of moss, wildflowers, and grasses cover the log. Because this work is located in a prominent location, and not hidden somewhere inaccessible, it advocates good ecological practice in a creative manner. Finally, Simpson's *Monolith,* albeit in an aggregate plant, still sheds light on a landscape. By juxtaposing the labor used to create Shasta Dam and the changing landscape that followed the completion of the structure, Simpson shows that man's impact on the earth is powerful. Simpson's Eco-Art is an artistic response to environmental problems. Although his works are not necessarily pragmatic solutions to the issues at hand, they all bring to light matters that should not remain hidden.

Figure 33: Dwan Gallery installation of *Earth Works,* (1968). Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press), 128.

Figure 34: Helen and Newton Harrison, *The Lagoon Cycle,* (1985). Helen and Newton Harrison, *The Lagoon Cycle,* exh. cat. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University and Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 1985), 89.

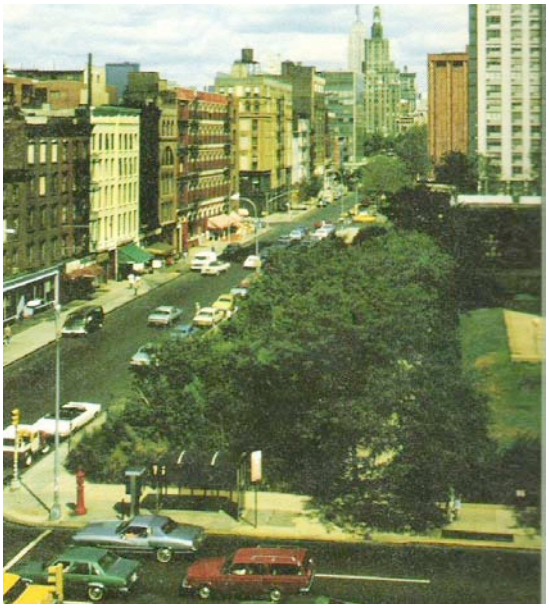

Figure 35: Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscape,* (1965/1978-present). Sue Spaid, *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002), 9.

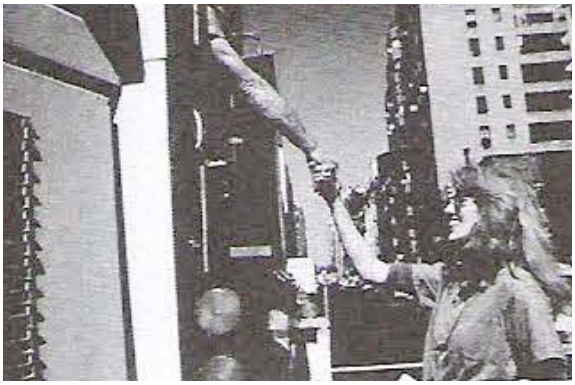

Figure 36: Mirele Laderman Ukeles, *Touch Sanitation,* (1978-79). Susan Leibovitz Steinman, "Compendium," in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* Suzanne Lacy, ed. (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1995), 282.

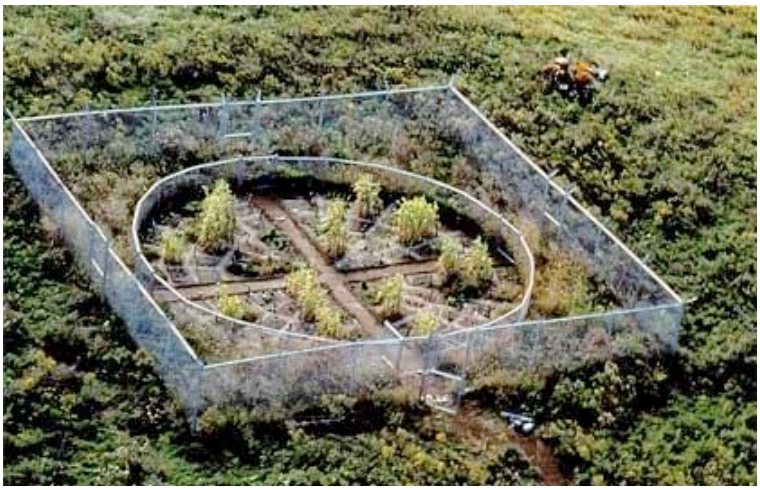

Figure 37: Mel Chin, *Revival Field,* (1990-93). Sue Spaid, *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002), 5.

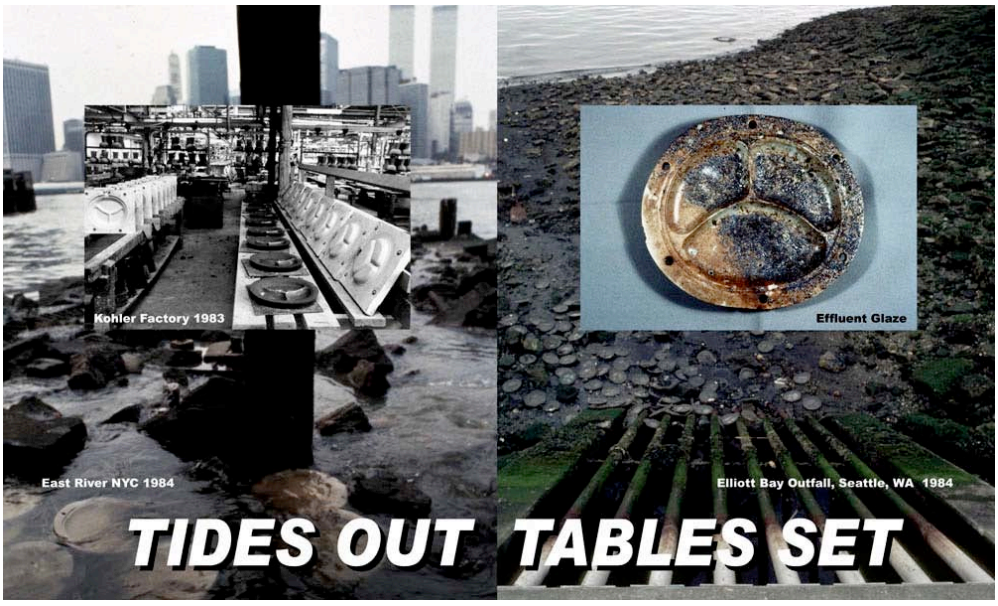

Figure 38: Buster Simpson, When the Tide is Out the Table is Set, (1983-84). Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives.

Figure 39: Buster Simpson, When the Tide is Out the Table is Set, (1983-84). Barbara Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, and Rizzoli International, 1992), 94.

Figure 40: Buster Simpson, *Hudson Headwater Purge,* (1991). Barbara Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, and Rizzoli International, 1992), 94.

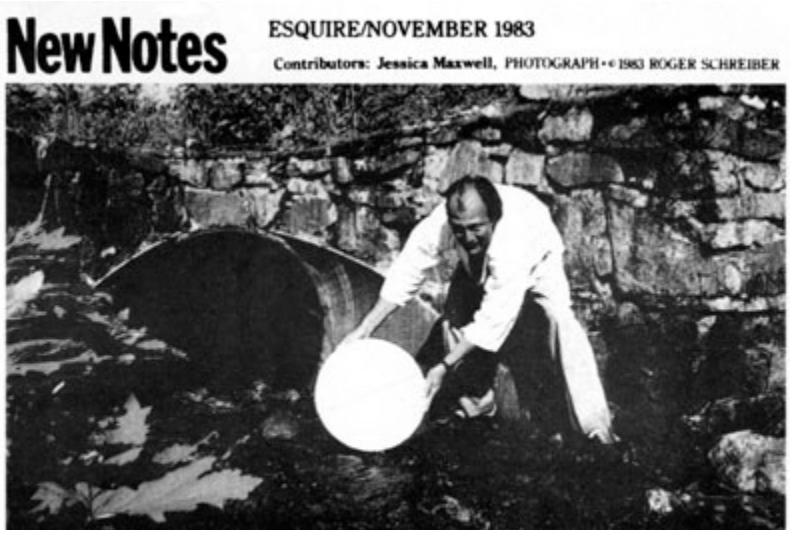

Figure 41: Image of Buster Simpson performing in *Esquire.* Jennifer Maxwell, "New Notes," *Esquire* 100 (November 1983): 226.

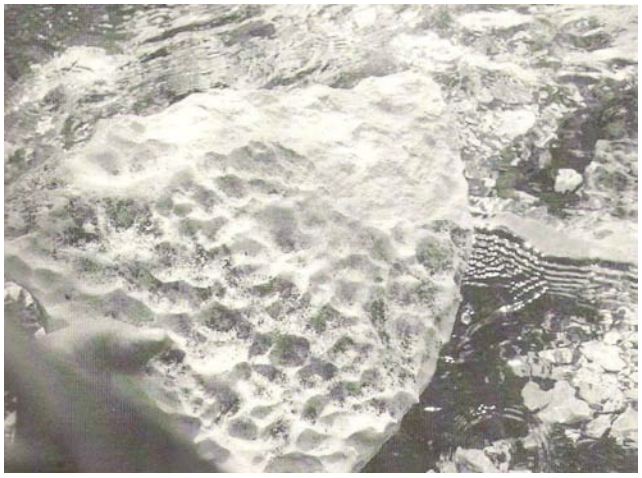

Figure 42: Buster Simpson, dissolved limestone disks after time in the Hudson River Linda Weintraub and Skip Schuckmann, *EnvironMentalities: Twenty-Two Approaches to Eco-Art* (Rhinebeck, NY: Artnow Publications, 2007), 125.

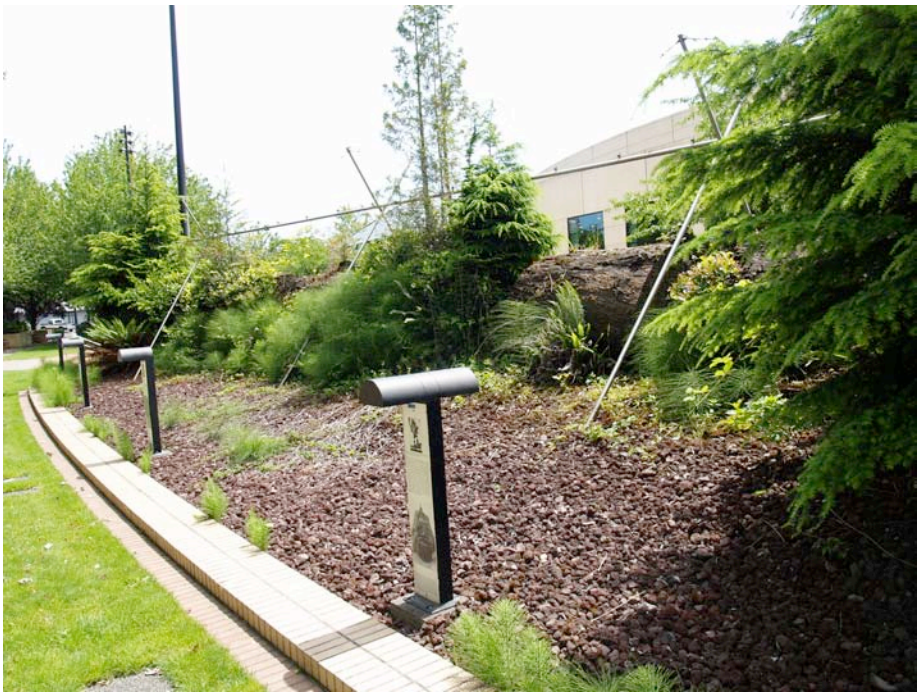

Figure 43: *Host Analog* (1991-present). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

Figure 44: First signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

Figure 45: Second signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

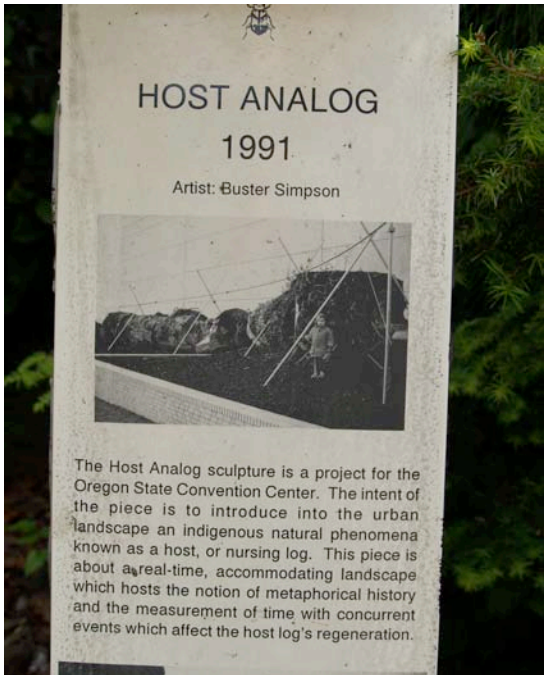

Figure 46: Image one on second signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

Figure 47: Second image on second signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

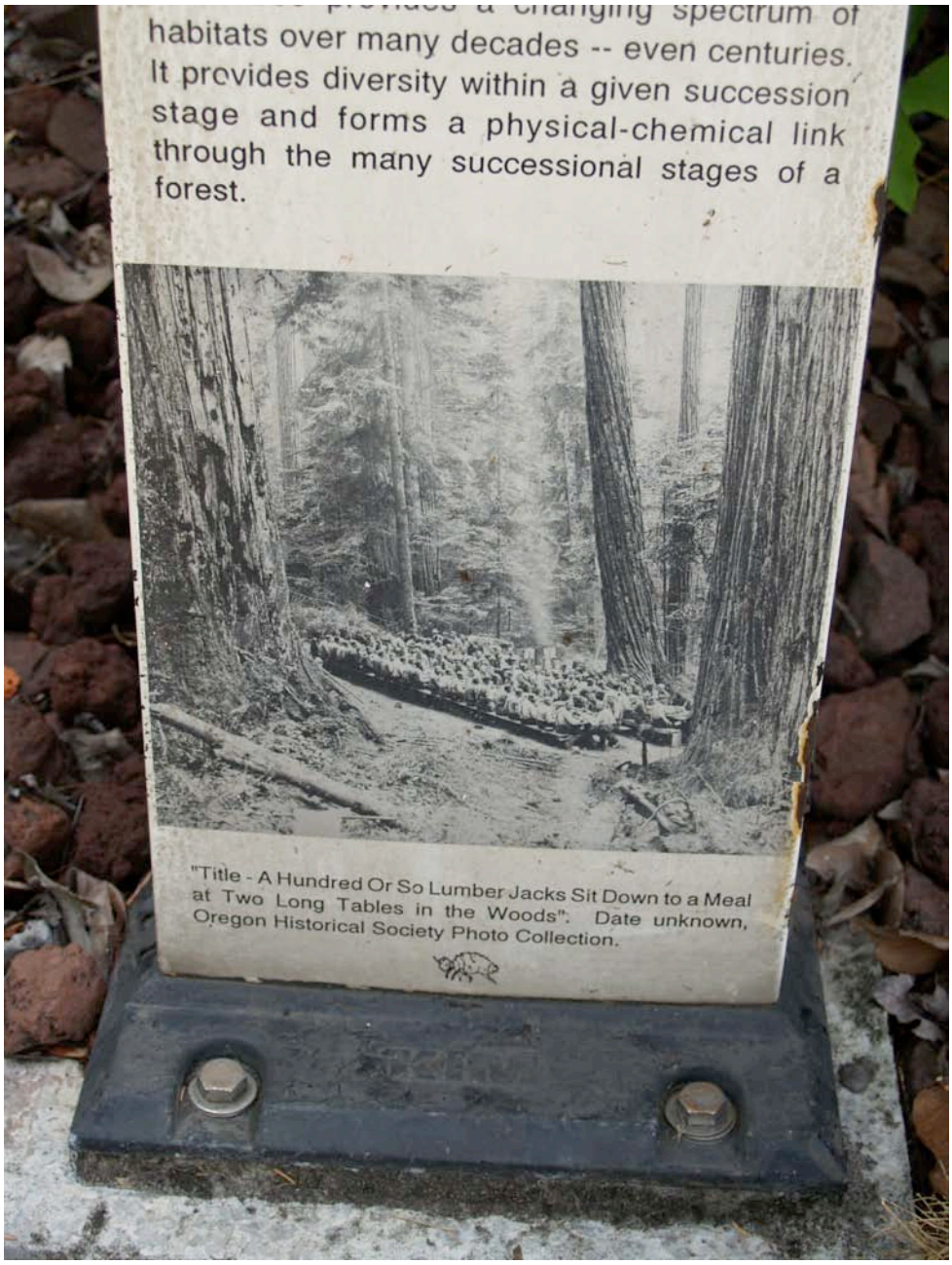

Figure 48: Third image on second signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

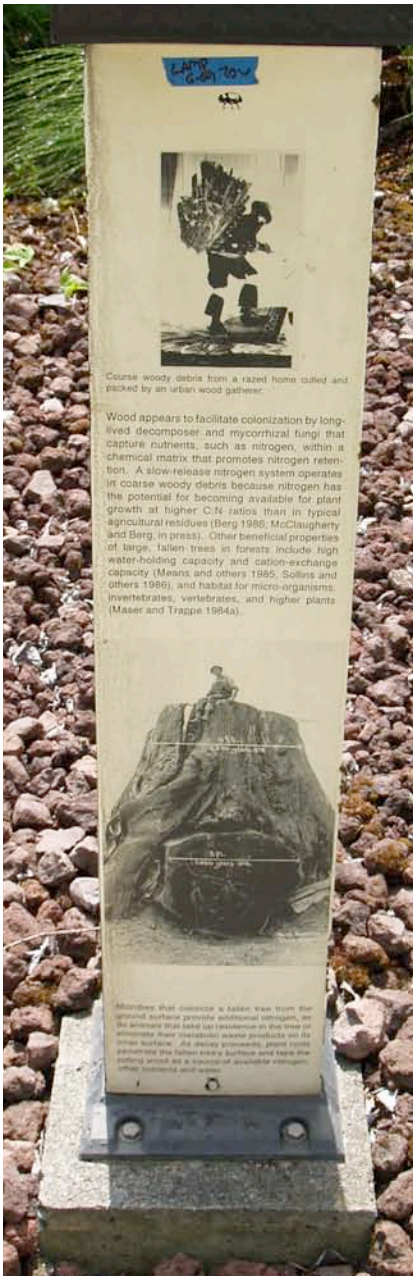

Figure 49: Third signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

Figure 50: Top image of fourth signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Photograph by the author

Figure 51: Bottom image of fourth signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Photograph by the author

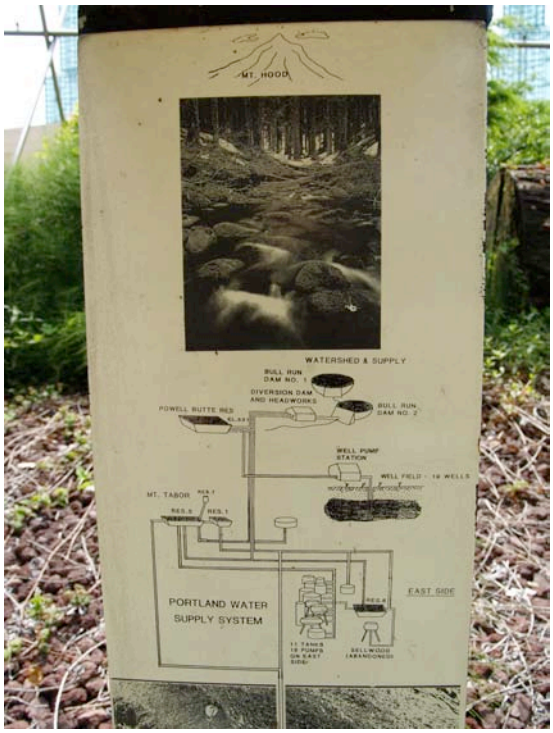

Figure 52: Top image on fifth signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

Figure 53: Middle image on fifth signpost, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

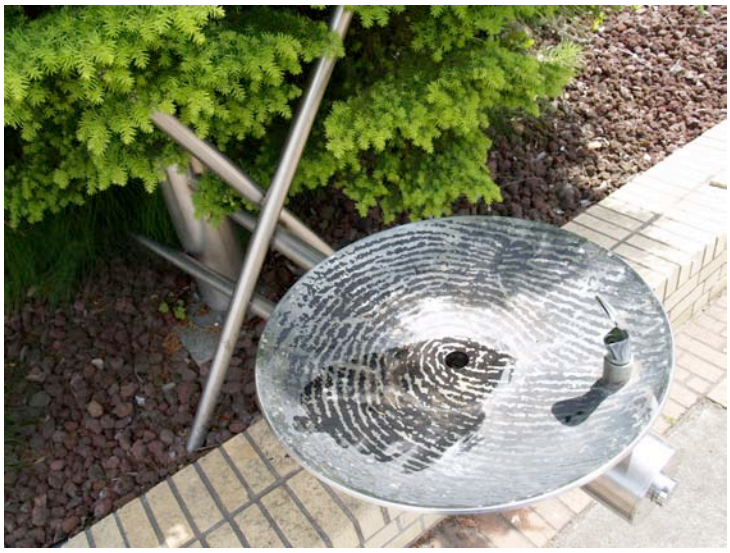

Figure 54: Water Fountain, *Host Analog* (1991). Portland, Oregon. Photograph by the author.

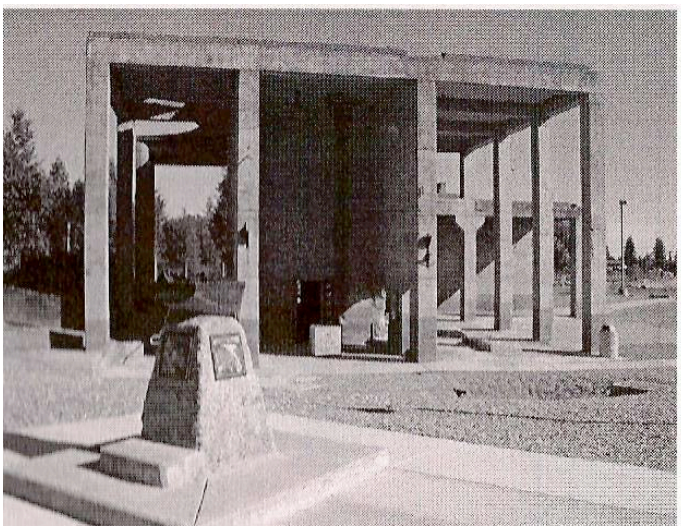

Figure 55: Buster Simpson, *Monolith* (2005). Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

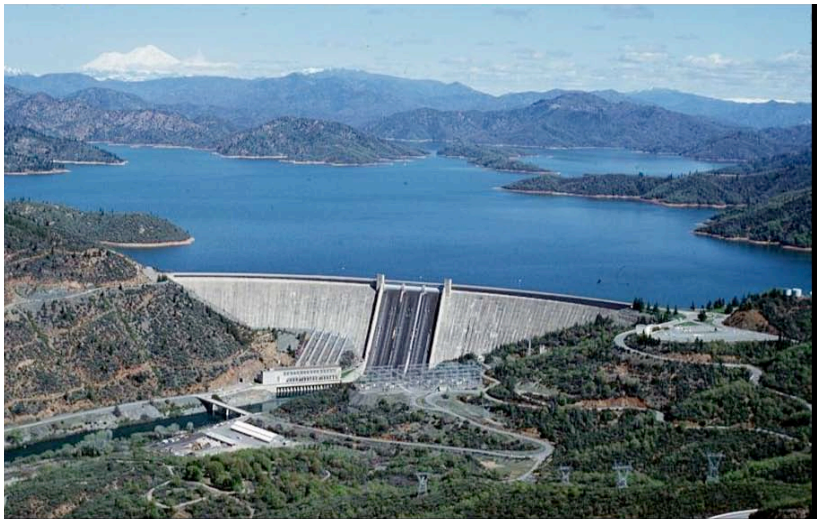

Figure 56: Shasta Dam. Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

Figure 57: Introductory Monument, *Monolith* (2005). Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

Figure 58: Buster Simpson, *Monolith,* One Cubic Yard Room. Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

Figure 59: Buster Simpson, *Monolith, One Cubic Yard.* Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

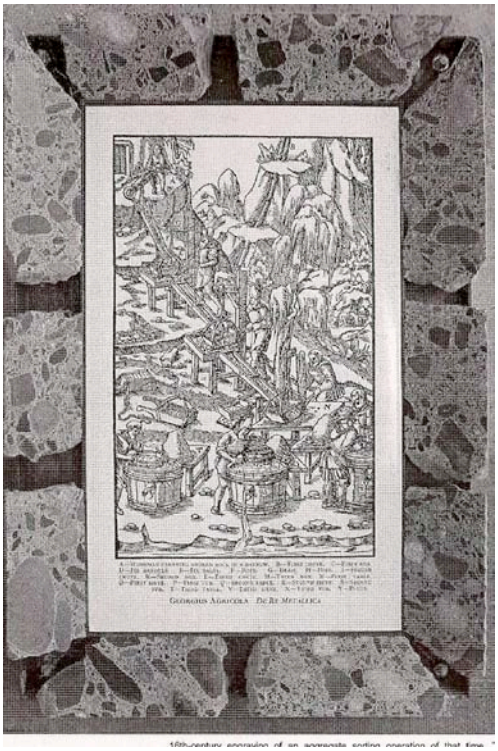

Figure 60: Sixteenth-Century Engraving. Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

Figure 61: Buster Simpson, *Doors of Aggregation.* Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

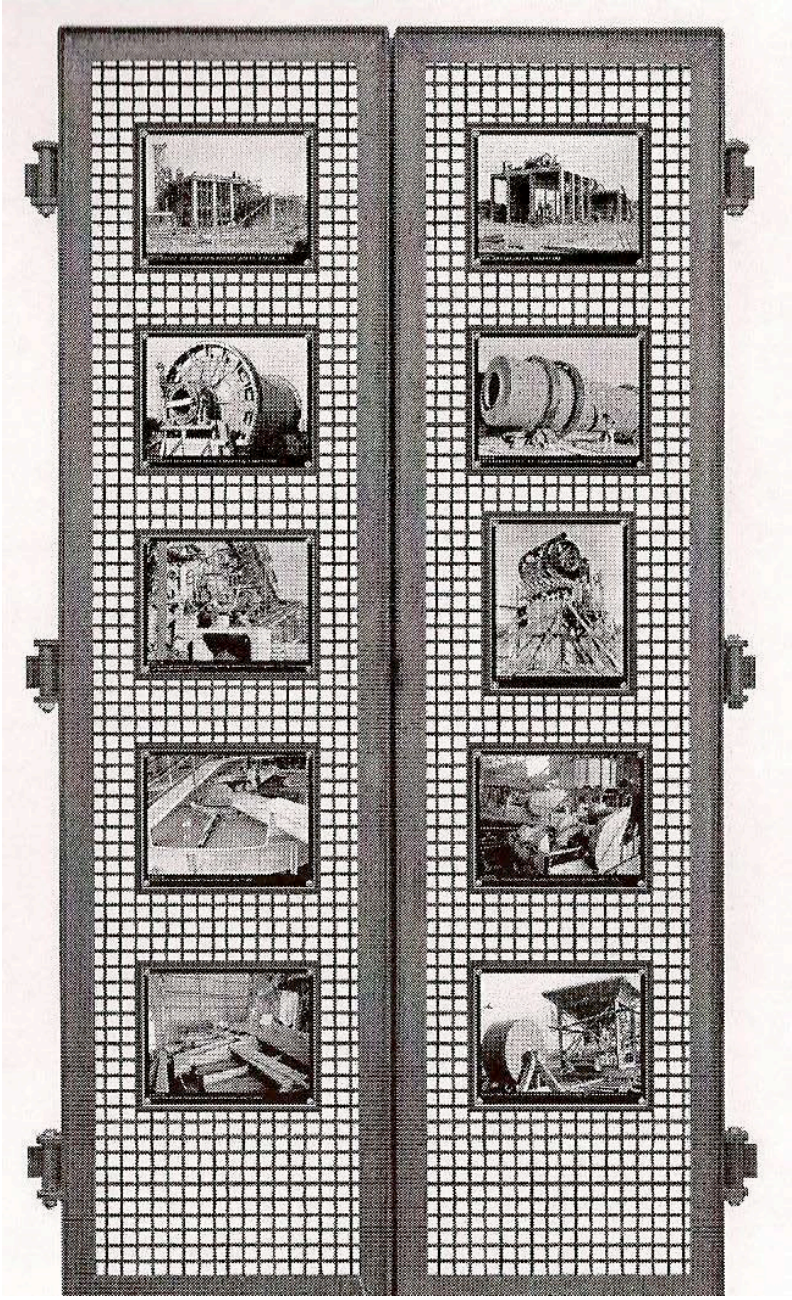

Figure 62: Buster Simpson, *Doors of Aggregation,* no. 2, side one and two. Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

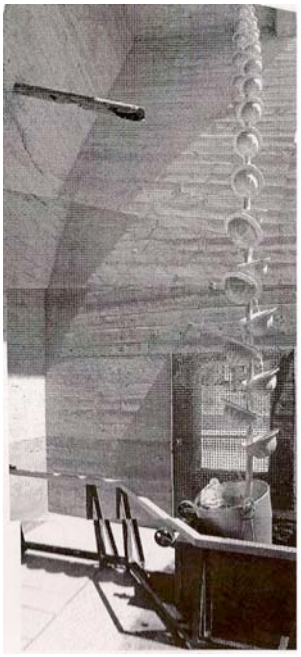

Figure 63: Buster Simpson, *Laborers' Offering to the Water Safe*. Buster Simpson's artist statement, property of the artist.

CHAPTER 4

BUSTER SIMPSON'S GARDENS:

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

Water is life's thirst quencher; thus, the cycle of water—through natural processes or concrete pipes—is crucial for the existence of life. The natural water cycle usually involves rain falling and accumulating into large bodies of water. The process is slowed and buffered by plants and vegetation, which retain a large portion of the water. In contrast, urban rainwater runoff management greatly speeds the progress of water from where it falls to larger bodies of water. Moreover, in many urban areas, rainwater management funnels this runoff into the sanitary sewer system. This system often inundates sewage treatment facilities during large rainstorms, resulting in the release of untreated sewage into local waterways.

While rainwater management systems are vital for the prevention of flooding within a city, the increased efficiency of water removal and the directing of it through the sanitary system have a significant impact on the quality and quantity of water entering streams and rivers.[455] In the "urban environment," faster rainwater runoff also carries with it vast amounts of pollutants that have accumulated on the hard, impermeable city surfaces. These pollutants, such as spilled oil from parked cars or soot from diesel engine exhaust, thus enter the natural water cycle at an accelerated rate.[456]

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[455] Robert Pitt and Shirley E. Clark, "Integrated Storm-Water Management for Watershed Sustainability," *Journal of Irrigation and Drainage Engineering* 134 (September 2008): 548. For a more in-depth look at urban water usage see, Joel A. Tarr, "Water Supply and Wastewater Disposal in the United States," in *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History,* ed. Char Miller (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 74-75.

[456] Simon J. Ha and Michael K. Stenstrom, "Predictive Modeling of Storm Water Runoff Quality and Quantity for a Large Urban Watershed," *Journal of Environmental Engineering* 134 (September 2008): 703. For information about how this affects urban populations, see Mary Sisson, "Drinking Water," in *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History,* ed. Char Miller (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 190-91.

In addition, because urban rainwater management systems are often invisible—pipes are buried underground and hidden beneath city streets—the cycle of water in the urban environment and the complexity of its management is easily disregarded. The processes by which rainwater interacts with the environment, especially in cities, needs to be better understood. While providing vital infrastructure, Buster Simpson's two public sculptures, *Growing Vine Street* (1997-ongoing) and *King Street Gardens* (1997), highlight the water cycle in the urban environment. The two gardens make the water cycle visible by making people aware of natural processes involved in rainwater runoff, while simultaneously revealing the function of the natural landscape in slowing and filtering runoff. Simpson transformed two urban streets into garden installations, which not only help put rainwater to use in irrigating urban gardens, but also make the water cycle visible for the neighborhood residents.

The first project discussed in this chapter, *Growing Vine Street,* created along eight sequential blocks in Seattle, creatively and whimsically revamped the path water would take after a rain. Instead of immediately being funneled into the sanitary sewer system, Simpson created cisterns, runnels, and rainspouts, which redirected the water through a series of plantings and gardens on its way directly to the bay. The second project, *King Street Gardens,* is a garden on a triangular plot of land in Alexandria, Virginia, that was designed to pay homage to the swampy marshland present when George Washington first surveyed the area. These two works each provide a visual environmental education; both make visible the management of rainwater runoff while providing an aesthetic green space in the urban environment. Both gardens make the invisible process of rainwater management visible while actually performing the function of a natural environment.

Creative and Educational Approaches to Sustainability

Teaching environmental education—imparting awareness of natural processes and the vital ecological roles they play—no longer means only teaching students about ecology through books in classrooms. Creative approaches, like Simpson's installations, may be implemented in order to reach those who would otherwise be blind to the processes of nature. Michael Hough, landscape architect and professor of environmental studies, eloquently writes:

> Environmental literacy strikes at the heart of urban life, and consequently at the way we think about and shape our cities. The perception of the city as separated from the natural processes that support life has long been a central problem in environmental thinking.[457]

Simpson's approach is one way to change environmental thinking. Not only does he demonstrate how neighborhood residents can recycle rainwater, he does so in public places. By placing his art outside the walls of museums, his environmental message is available for anyone who passes by the work.

To further environmental education, one can start at the local level with encouraging people to take ownership of their neighborhoods. Places will not become more ecologically sustainable if people do not communicate with each other. Franco Bianchini, a cultural planner who incorporates arts and cultural resources into cities, claims, that "what urban planners and policy-makers also need today is perhaps the creativity of artists . . . [They provide] the creativity of being able to synthesize; to see the connections between the natural, social, cultural, political, and economic environments . . . "[458] His suggestions include developing "permeable borders" between urban

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[457] Michael Hough, *Cities and Natural Process: A Basis for Sustainability*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 19.

[458] Franco Bianchini, "Cultural Planning for Urban Sustainability," *City and Culture: Cultural Processes and Urban Sustainability* 24 (March 1999): 42-43.

neighborhoods that do not usually interact. Such connections would foster multiculturalism by sharing food, music, and other ethnic arts, and encouraging dialogue between diverse groups.[459] Due to the polarized climate of today's industrialized world, however, Bianchini's suggestions are often impractical because of language and cultural differences.[460]

Other academicians have suggested ways to spread information about sustainability. Barbara Eckstein and James Throgmorton claim that storytelling can be one approach in the introduction to their collection of essays, *Story and Sustainability: Planning, Practice, and Possibility for American Cities*. In her chapter, Eckstein writes, "carefully told and carefully heard, stories do have the potential to act as a bridge between engrained habits and new futures."[461] Because boundaries are set within stories, and narrators are often in the same space as their audiences, connections are easily made.[462] Planning and Development professors Dowell Myers and Alicia Kitsuse also claim that storytelling is beneficial to sustainability. They write, "storytelling illuminates the whole of a problem by forcing problem setters to identify the key actors and chain of events that lead to the circumstance perceived as problematic."[463] Telling stories about how one can care for his or her community is often more feasible than encouraging multicultural neighborhoods to step across invisible barriers.

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[459] Ibid., 47-49.

[460] Bianchini does admit that the ideas he is suggesting are difficult to accomplish, for it is not easy to break cultural boundaries. See ibid., 46.

[461] Eckstein does note, however, that "their ability to act as transformative agents depends upon disciplined scrutiny of their forms and uses." Barbara Eckstein, "Making Space: Stories in the Practice of Planning," in *Story and Sustainability: Planning, Practice, and Possibility for American Cities*, ed. Barbara Eckstein and James Throgmorton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 13.

[462] Ibid.

[463] Dowell Myers and Alicia Kitsuse, "Constructing Visions of a Sustainable Future," *Ecological Applications* 26 (January 2000): 227.

In a similar vein, artists can take stories—the ecological history of the land for example—and turn the verbal explanation into one that is visual. In the case of Buster Simpson, he is able to tell a story through the artwork's geographical and historical location; especially when that history lies literally beneath the surface. His strength as an artist is his ability to reveal what is hidden. Simpson's sustainable urban gardens make the natural processes of water apparent. The purpose and significance of his work is to make people aware of their surroundings and to suggest proactive solutions to environmental problems.

Selections from Simpson's oeuvre demonstrate how his art invests in communities and how he engages local inhabitants. Because city-dwellers are often oblivious to how the water cycle operates, Simpson's works stand as a visual reminder that the path of water should not go unnoticed. Simpson's *Growing Vine Street* and *King Street Gardens* render the management of water visible by elevating its flow pattern above ground. In both Seattle and Alexandria, the inclusion of art made two ordinary streets into artistic installations. Moreover, the works demonstrate how the development of urban environments impacts the natural flow of water. Thus, Simpson's projects provide an aesthetic, practical, and educational view of both nature and culture.

Balancing Nature and Culture

Balancing nature and culture can mean respecting the natural processes that shape land and enrich biodiversity.[464] A community can accomplish this feat by creating a

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[464] Finding the balance between cultivating nature and preserving it has spilled much ink. The myriad of articles and books about the subject include nineteenth-century works such as Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," *American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836): 1-12; Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1836); and Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1854). Some twentieth-century works include Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), and Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

symbiotic relationship between the land and the people who live upon it. The transitional space between nature and culture are often gardens and parks. Both consist of lush, vegetation that depends upon human involvement in order to thrive. As Michael Pollan notes, there is goodness in gardening, but we, as mere humans, should trust evolution, not our own intelligence, when attempting to cultivate nature:

> If you think of evolution as a three-and-a-half-billion-year-long laboratory experiment, and the gene pool as the store of information accumulated during the course of that experiment, you begin to appreciate that nature has far more extensive knowledge about her operations than we do.[465]

Thus, one way to create a symbiotic relationship with the environment is to take knowledge from nature's natural flow of life and implement it into urban designs.

In cities, the natural flow of water takes a different path than rain that falls in forests. Depending on location, water flows through two divergent landscapes—the "pedigreed" and the "vernacular." As stated by Michael Hough, these designations represent the conflicting values of the environment; water moves very differently through native landscapes as compared to cultivated landscapes.[466] The vernacular, or natural landscape, consists of invisible pathways and areas of nature, such as waterfronts, underground water tables, and drainage basins. This vernacular landscape is often supplanted by perfectly manicured parks, fresh cut lawns, and mounds of flowers planted in boulevards. For the pedigreed landscape to survive, pipes have to carry water through underground artificial waterways.[467]

Simpson's tactic in both of his garden installations was to merge the vernacular and the pedigreed landscape together. He used a pedigreed aesthetic to capture the

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[465] Michael Pollan, *Second Nature: A Gardner's Education* (New York: Dell, 1991), 51.

[466] Hough, 6.

[467] Ibid.

viewer's attention, but created a landscape that mimics the natural flow of water. By combining the two approaches, he provides urban centers with sustainable gardens. These gardens do not need excessive irrigation, for their designs utilize the water provided by local runoff. In both installations, rain is collected and can be reused to water nearby vegetation. In the case of *Growing Vine Street*, rain gathers in cisterns and runnels. In the *King Street Gardens,* rain is directed into an artificial marsh. Both projects make use of the existing land, water, and climate to sustain life and inform people about their local environmental history.

Contemporary Ideas about Land Use

Environmental sustainability can be defined as the ability to restore natural resources at a rate faster than they can be consumed or degraded by natural and unnatural processes.[468] Urban environments are far from being sustainable in terms of protecting natural resources.[469] The United States' Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that excessive land use has a negative impact on the natural environment. Thus, implementing urban design that promotes environmental sustainability could lessen the damage development does to nature.[470] Michael Hough proposed a way to integrate sustainability with urban planning: environmental education can play a key part in solving the sustainability problem. He criticizes the way that the natural sciences and urban planning are often taught. The educational system "externalizes our understanding

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[468] Richard B. Howarth, "Adaptive Management and the Philosophy of Environmental Policy," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 17 (Summer 2007): 457.

[469] Stacey Swearingen White and Cliff Ellis, "Sustainability, the Environment, and New Urbanism," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 24 (Summer 2004): 125-42..

[470] United States Environmental Protection Agency, *EPA's Smart Growth INDEX in 20 Pilot Communities: Using GIS Sketch Modeling to Advance Smart Growth* (Washington, DC: United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2003), 1.

of 'nature'" and takes humans out of the global picture. Thus, only education that is honest about the human impact on nature can bring about environmental literacy.[471]

The alarming rate of population growth in the United States alone emphasizes the need for solutions regarding sustainability. By the year 2025, the population of the United States will have increased by sixty million. America's land and water use will in all likelihood increase in proportion with the population, unless ideas about urban sustainable design become mainstream. Thus, if education is the key to solving the environmental sustainability problem of urban design, becoming an environmentally literate person is not just desirable, it is *necessary*.

Seattle

Simpson's work in the city of Seattle is about environmental sustainability. Although the city itself is quite small, the surrounding area has a large population. While Seattle has not grown significantly in the past forty years—gaining less than 25,000 new residents—the surrounding region has grown from 7.7 million to 14.4 million inhabitants.[472] Seattle's suburbs now cover over one hundred square miles.[473] Because of the region's unique and delicate ecosystem, consisting of mountainous terrain, coniferous pine forests, fresh water lakes, salt water bays, and numerous indigenous species of flora and fauna, this explosion of population poses an ever-growing threat to the ecosystem.

Although Seattle's population will inevitably grow, there are solutions that can help restore natural processes. One underlying issue is the water system. Obviously, a

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[471] Hough, 258.

[472] This information was from direct contact with the Service Bureau of Seattle. It can also be found at www.seattle.gov.

[473] A. Phillip Andrus, *Seattle* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1976), 2.

city of Seattle's population needs a sizable infrastructure. On average, Seattle receives over thirty-six inches of rain per year. Much of the rain that falls on the city runs into the sewer systems.[474] These sewers often overflow causing rainwater and raw sewage to flow into Puget Sound and Lake Union. On occasions, even buildings in the city are flooded. To combat such problems, in February of 2008, Seattle's city government allotted 500 million dollars for wastewater system upgrades.[475]

Sustainable development should include four methods for urban rainwater management: harvesting, infiltrating, storing, and piping rainwater.[476] Harvesting rainwater is the process of gathering rain after it falls. Rainwater infiltration is the process by which water permeates the soil and enters into the water table or the sewer system. Storing and piping rainwater depend on cisterns and drainage systems. These four processes mimic the natural flow of the water cycle. Simpson's *Growing Vine Street*, incorporates all four of approaches. Simpson notes the impetus behind his project: "As cities become denser and face increasing pressure to be more social and sustainable, community-engaging catalysts are going to be crucial. It is public interaction that makes cities urbane."[477]

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[474] Carolyn Giese, Kurt Dumphy, Janis Ford, Sandi Hogben, and Greg Waddell, *Growing Vine Street Revisited 2004* (Seattle: King County, 2004), 1. Statistics from 2001 claimed that "Seattle had 556 overflow events which dumped 272 gallons of tainted water into the natural water systems."

[475] Ron Sims, "Infrastructure Investments, Environmental Improvements, Top Clean Water Agency Priorities in 2008," *King County Executive* 4 (February 2008): 3.

[476] Bing Zieng, Hai-qiao Tan, and Li-juan Wu, "A New Approach to Urban Rainwater Management," *Journal of China University of Mining and Technology* 17 (March 2007): 82. See also Joel A. Tarr, "Water Supply and Wastewater Disposal in the United States," in *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History,* ed. Char Miller (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 74-75.

[477] Buster Simpson, "Perpendicular and Parallel Streetscape Stories," in *Belltown Paradise*, ed. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg and Anthony Elms (Chicago: White Walls, 2004), 59.

Growing Vine Street as an Evolving Model for a Sustainable Urban Environment

The Belltown P-Patch: Inspiration for Growth

Simpson's long-time involvement in the Vine Street neighborhood of Seattle culminated in the *Growing Vine Street* project. The project demonstrates one approach to restoring sustainability in an urban environment. This area stretches from Elliott Bay through the densely populated Belltown neighborhood. The idea for this project stemmed from the historical garden in Belltown. The garden, affectionately called the Belltown P-Patch, began in 1973 and was the first organic gardening collective in the country.[478]

In 1981, Simpson moved to the neighborhood. He and two neighbors began incorporating vegetables, whimsical designs, and winding paths into their community space (fig. 64). [479] Over time, the residents who maintained the plots moved away, including Simpson, resulting in the abandonment of the garden plots. Once the residents stopped using the garden, the lot quickly became a favorite place for vagrants.[480] As a result, the lot which once grew life became littered with trash. Then, in the early 1990s, residents of Vine Street rallied together to clean up the area. The neighbors pooled their resources to purchase the land. Later, when the use of the garden was threatened by a proposed commercial development on an adjacent lot, the city sided in favor of retaining a permanent green space over the commercial development and purchased the land.[481]

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[478] The "P" in "P-Patch" stands for *Picardo*, the family who first owned the garden lot. Jim Diers, *Neighborhood Power: Building Community the Seattle Way* (Seattle, and London: University of Washington Press, 2004), 101.

[479] Glenn MacGilvra, "Belltown P-Patch and Cottage Park," in *Belltown Paradise*, eds. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg and Anthony Elms (Chicago: White Walls, 2004), 13. The other two gardeners were Katherine Shedd and Carl Smool.

[480] Diers, 112.

[481] Ibid., 114. The garden, however, did not come into fruition without hurdles. In order to expand the garden outside of the three garden plots, the community would have to raise money

After the purchase, the P-Patch became a meeting place for community artists. A mosaic mural with bees, birds, and flowers was created on the concrete retaining wall and a whimsical steel fence now surrounds the plots. Additionally, incorporated into the steel gates are images of spades and shovels, flora and fauna.[482] With the help of city funds, Belltown also preserved the historic houses in the neighborhood; these included three old cottages built in 1917. Today, the cottages are used for Writers-in-Residence programs (figs. 65 and 66).[483] As Jim Dine, director of the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods claims, the Belltown P-Patch is an "urban oasis for many more people than those who actually do the gardening there."[484] After witnessing the success of their garden space, the neighborhood residents decided to broaden the scope of their project. They felt that, if the residents could turn a derelict lot into a garden, they could certainly turn a street

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to purchase the 6,000 square-foot lot, which was owned by Joe Diamond and the Skyway Luggage Company. In 1989, the lot finally went up for sale. Because King County had just passed the Open Space Bond, this allowed community members to collect money to purchase land in "fast growing region[s]" to be used for open space. However, because this area of Belltown was in the heart of Seattle, the land was highly sought after for retail use or commercial development. Ultimately, the neighborhood residents raised enough money through grants and private donations to purchase the land for green space use, and in 1993, the land was purchased for $450,000. The Belltown residents continued to garden in this area without issues until 1997. It was then that the neighboring Skyway Luggage Company, who owned lots to the south of the area, decided they wanted to expand. Their expansion would include a 120 foot high building that would shade everything in the garden. For the next three years, community members gathered activists to save the green space. Much to the Belltown resident's surprise, the city favored turning the plot into a green space as opposed to developing it commercially. The City of Seattle bought the lot for $900,000 in 2000. These issues were concurrent with the development of *Growing Vine Street.* See MacGilvra, 8-12.

[482] Ibid.

[483] Ibid., 115. This report, taken from the State Department of Health, had researched the safety of the site. The gardening site was questioned due to concerns of high lead contents thought to have come from the antiquated cannery. However, the samples were found to contain toxins well under the legal limit. Thus, the site, even being placed in the middle of a city, is safe for gardening. See Gary Palciscko, *Health Consultation: Belltown P-Patch, Seattle, King County* (Seattle: Washington State Department of Health, 2001), 3-12.

[484] Ibid.

into a water recycler. Because the garden was already attached to Vine Street, it was only natural that the green space should grow into the connecting street.

The idea of creating a green street stemmed from Myke Woodwell and Eulah Sheffield, two Seattle residents who were committed to solving Seattle's environmental problems. Throughout the next fifteen years, the duo worked with a group of residents from Belltown who first came together in 1996 to accomplish this feat. This group included Carolyn Geise, a local architect developer, Peter Voorhees, a Department of Seattle Transportation Planner, David Craven, an architect, and Buster Simpson, an artist. Simpson, of course, had a long history of incorporating environmentally sustainable art into public places.[485] Fifteen people met bimonthly during 1996 and 1997 to devise a concrete plan for how to create a sustainable green space in an urban setting.[486]

Simpson was asked to participate because of his experience with creating solutions for urban problems, and he was a crucial member of the team.[487] According to Geise, Simpson "typified the spirit we were trying to capture."[488] Simpson incorporated the team's ideas in tangible sculptures that now line Vine Street. The basic plan for the project was to use a "design concept" that would continue to grow and merge with the city and to enhance the lives of the residents of Seattle.[489] This idea resulted from

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[485] Prior to this project, Simpson created *Exchanger Fountain* in Anaheim, California (1993), which reuses grey water to water a nearby willow tree and cool the water for a whimsical drinking fountain. In 1984, he began the series *When the Tide Is Out the Table Is Set,* which acknowledges a Samish Native American saying that links low tide to feasts of shellfish. Referring to the bounty of fish in the rivers' past, Simpson's work documents the present overabundance of pollutants and lack of aquatic life, which promotes environmental awareness. These are two projects of many which show his aptitude in working with water.

[486] Carolyn Geise, "Denny Regrade to Belltown," in *Belltown Paradise*, ed. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg, and Anthony Elms (Chicago: White Walls, 2004), 32.

[487] Ibid.

[488] Ibid.

[489] Ibid. Also see, Maryann Whitman, "Growing Vine Street," *Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes* 16 (January/February 2003): 20-23.

witnessing the previous success of the Belltown P-Patch neighborhood garden, which brought the community together by caring for the environment. Because Belltown was one of the most populated neighborhoods in Seattle, green space was desperately needed. Since property for additional lots adjacent to the P-Patch were not available, the team proposed that they extend the growing plot of the garden into the street.[490]

The Impetus behind *Growing Vine Street*

The purpose of *Growing Vine Street* was to create an environmentally sound neighborhood. Simpson's part in the project was specific: he helped design a path for the water to follow that would raise awareness about the issues of rainwater management, while preventing rainwater from entering the sewer system. His project demonstrated how wastewater can be used to sustain plants and gardens.[491] The work emphasizes rain channels and reservoirs. Instead of roofs and roads funneling the rain directly into the overflowing sewers, Simpson's above-ground runnels and cisterns irrigated a "green street" within the urban fabric of the city. A "green street," as defined by the Seattle Municipal Code, is "a street right-of-way which is part of the street circulation pattern, that through a variety of treatments, such as sidewalk widening, landscaping, traffic calming, and pedestrian-oriented features, is enhanced for circulation and open space use."[492]

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[490] Diers, 114.

[491] Since Simpson's water-recycling inclusion, Seattle incorporated a "Street Edge Alternatives Project" on 2nd Avenue between 117th and 120th Streets. This project was "designed to provide drainage that more closely mimics the natural landscape prior to development than traditional piped systems." By adding more greenery and less surface detention, this street is seen to be another green success of Seattle. See Seattle's website, "Street Edge Alternatives Project," at http://www.seattle.gov.

[492] Drew A. Gangnes, "Seattle's Green Streets Ripe for Modernization," *Urban Development* 13 (October 2003): 23.

The Functionality of *Growing Vine Street*

Growing Vine Street reveals the water cycle. This natural system has operated on earth for billions of years. The physical state of water changes from vapor, which condenses into droplets and falls from the sky in some form of precipitation. Rainfall is then filtered through the soil. While some is retained in vegetation, the remainder ends up in reservoirs, which may take the form of lakes, streams, or rivers (fig. 67). The largest reservoirs are the earth's oceans.[493] After water evaporates and returns to the ground as precipitation, it is gathered in soil, forests, and grasses.[494] Vegetation is vital when attempting to contain storm water runoff. Vegetation provides natural water filtration along with controlling the velocity of the drainage through the soil. The roots of vegetation also prevent erosion and sedimentation.[495]

Because Seattle, like most urban areas, contains buildings and roads, water cannot be absorbed naturally into the earth.[496] Instead, it must be filtered through pipes, which often overflow (fig. 68). Compare the water collected in a parking lot after a rain to a forest floor after a storm. Obviously, the impermeable cement surface will capture the runoff, and funnel it into the sewer system, where it must be cleaned at a filtration plant. On a forest floor, the trees and plants absorb the water, and the soil filters it as it leaches through the ground. By the time rain has reached the water table, nature has effortlessly done the job that humans work hard to achieve.

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[493] Spirn, 144.

[494] Hough, 71.

[495] Ibid., 72.

[496] In areas where watersheds are prevalent, however, polluted rain runoff often contaminates lakes and rivers after rainstorms. In a recent study, perfluorinated acids, a type of chemical that is heat and water resistant and do not degrade, has been found in lakes and rivers after urban rains. See Seung-Kyu Kim and Kurunthachalam Kannan, "Perfluorinated Acids in Air, Rain, Snow, Surface Runoff, and Lakes: Relative Importance of Pathways to Contamination of Urban Lakes," *Environmental Science and Technology* 41 (December 2007): 8328-34.

Humans, of course, can never exactly mimic the organic cycle of nature. But with a bit of creativity and persistence, they can restore some of the natural processes to the urban environment. Although Simpson's Vine Street project does not supplant nature's true hydrological cycle, it does provide a solution to a particular problem. With its visible pipes and cisterns, it makes the water cycle apparent and mitigates Seattle's sewer overflow problem.

The Concept of *Growing Vine Street*

The concept of *Growing Vine Street* was three-fold. The installation made a path from the street to the waterfront at Puget Sound, brought nature to the street, and redirected, reused, and captured local rain runoff. Of the three goals, the last one fueled the project. As Simpson claimed, he wanted to use grey water—water that comes in the form of precipitation—as an "asset rather than a liability flushed out of sight."[497] Since Vine Street was naturally elevated, he could use the hill to his advantage. Instead of fighting the existing infrastructure, Simpson and his team used it to channel the natural path of rainwater. He claims the design "nurtured the streetscape" through an interconnected structure of gutters and rainspouts. The rainspouts emptied into cisterns, and then drained into small watercourses called "runnels."[498] Thus, after a downpour on Vine Street, instead of all the grey water running into the sewer system, it was recycled.

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[497] Simpson, 59. "Grey water" is also classified as relatively clean water that is discarded from homes in the form of bathwater, dishwater, and laundry water. One case study in Israel shows that reusing grey water is an economically feasible solution for their high water demand in urban areas. See, E. Friedler, "The Water Saving Potential and the Socio-Economic Feasibility of Greywater Reuse within the Urban Sector—Israel as a Case Study," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 65 (February 2008): 57-69. However, an article published in the same issue claims that Israeli standards for grey water use is unsuitable for American standards. See the discussion in A. Gross, A. Wiel-Shafran, N. Bondarenko, and Z. Ronen, "Reliability of Small Scale Greywater Treatment Systems and the Impact of Its Effluent on Soil Properties," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 65 (February 2008): 41-50.

[498] Ibid., 60

The installation either stores water in cisterns to be used for watering plants, or it channels it straight down into the bay, watering plants along the way. Because this system is transparent—it is visible to the residents in the neighborhood—it provides an example of how a community can become more sustainable.

Vine Street begins at the top of the hill at Denny Way and leads to Elliott Bay (the bay off the coast of Seattle) (fig. 69). Storefronts and residential buildings line the urban path. An office building and condominium complex, known as 81 Vine Street, sits right in the middle of the eight-block installation. The office building contains detention planters that collect water after a rainstorm. The excess rain is funneled through the planters and off the cement sections of the roof into downspouts that are upturned to allow plants to grow. The rain, which flows down the spouts, ends at the *Beckoning Cistern.* The cistern is placed next to the street and gathers water in a large blue storage container. When the cistern is full, it runs over the side and into a channel, which is flanked by native plants. This "runnel" flows down the street and eventually reaches the *Cistern Steps.* The steps collect water in aesthetically pleasing collection pools, which provide water for the P-Patch community garden. At the end of Vine Street, the Skyway Luggage Building houses the *Skyway Seedbank.* Simpson converted an old watertower platform on the roof into a volunteer seedbank. He used the seedbank to plant old suitcases, which he entitled *Portable Landscapes.* These sculptures once lined Vine Street in six different locations along the street. Sitting on corners, these suitcases sprouted plants and flowers. Planters made from old oil barrels, which referenced the abandoned industrial plant behind it, end the tour of Vine Street, although the view extends into Elliot Bay. Because the planted vegetation depends on water for survival, this installation visually demonstrates how plants and gardens can be watered by redirecting excess rain runoff.

Reusing Rainwater

To begin in greater detail, the 81 Vine Street Building, an old 1914 factory owned by architect Carolyn Geise, uses three artistic inventions by Simpson to capture storm water (fig. 70). The old factory, refurbished as condominiums, now also functions as a "demonstration lab" for channeling water.[499] Simpson's sculptures include the rooftop garden and two independent sculptures called *Beckoning Cistern* (2003) and *Vertical Landscape Downspouts* (1999) (figs. 71, 72, and 73). The rooftop garden, designed by Simpson and Peggy Gaynor, was created with a water filtration method in mind. Because this building's roof is flat, rainwater collects on the surface. Simpson and Gaynor created an artificial wetland on the roof to capture the water (fig. 71). The "moat" collects water through a large corrugated pipe, which is creatively designed to hold plants.[500] The planters grow native plants such as willows, Oregon grapes, and blueberry bushes. The grey water is not drained immediately into sewers; instead, it is used to nourish the native plants on the rooftop.[501]

Although much of the water is used for the vegetation, the excess water still needs to be drained from the rooftop. Thus, Simpson invented *Vertical Landscape Downspouts* for this purpose (fig. 72). The *Vertical Landscape Downspouts* are attached to the building, providing a passageway for the rainwater to follow. Instead of regular downspouts, which are designed to blend into the building, Simpson's plumbing structures are meant to be noticed: the corrugated aluminum pipe downspouts are whimsical and prominent. The rain from the roof flows down the vertical pipe and gathers in U-shaped planters that reach toward the sky. At the ends of these small

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[499] Whitman, 1.

[500] Clair Enlow, "Growing Vine Street Takes Root at 81 Vine," *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* 45 (September 5, 2001): 23.

[501] Geise, et al., *Growing Vine Street Revisited 2004,* 1.

openings, Simpson planted foliage, which dangles down the sides. Similar to the roof garden, the water nourishes the plants, and the excess runs down the rainspouts along side of the building and into the large cistern that sits near the street.

Simpson's *Beckoning Cistern* is functional, yet it contains artistic symbolism (fig. 73). On top of the ten-foot by six-foot tank, a green hand reaches toward the sky, mimicking Adam's gesture in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel ceiling (fig. 74).[502] The delicate finger of Simpson's sculpture points toward the heavens, but finds water instead of the hand of God. Just as God brings life with a single touch in the Renaissance fresco, so too does the rain give life to the vegetation along Vine Street.

The rainspout from the building is attached to the end of the index finger; the water flows down the finger and into the cistern. Once the cistern is full, the rainwater drains out of the thumb and into the surrounding landscape.[503] The remaining water is left for the residents to use as they please. During the wet months, the cistern holds enough water for the tenants to water their plants.[504] The cistern also juts out into the street, making it difficult for pedestrians not to notice the bright blue and green structure. In this way, the sculpture draws attention to creative alternatives to wasting rainwater.

In *Growing Vine Street,* water recycling continues down the hill by way of the "runnel." It flows around planters and curves in the sidewalk (fig. 75).[505] The excess rainwater nourishes the plants along the way. Because the street naturally slants downhill,

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[502] Ibid. The superimposed image of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* and *Beckoning Cistern* was Simpson's creation. In order to make Adam's hand reach toward the sky, Simpson flipped Michelangelo's image exactly one-hundred and eighty degrees.

[503] Simpson, 58.

[504] Clair Enlow, "A Watershed Moment on a Belltown Street," *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* 56 (February 19, 2003): 14.

[505] Whitman, 2.

gravity brings the rainwater from the top of the hill to the bottom, watering plants and gardens as it flows downward. The path the water travels is visible to those who pass along the street (fig. 76). Residents and visitors watch the water flow from the runnel into a garden area called the *Cistern Steps.*

The *Cistern Steps* (2001) consist of concrete planters that descend beside stairs made for pedestrians (fig. 77). The rain, funneled from downspouts, connects the cistern to the neighboring building. The *Cistern Steps* are adjacent to the Belltown P-Patch, and are considered to be an extension of the garden. The gardens contain small pools of water, which collect the rain runoff from the street.[506] Rain gathers in one pool, and eventually spills into another down the *Cistern Steps*.[507] Native plants and trees line the steps and thrive there.

Bringing Nature to the Street

At the base of the hill, Simpson brought nature to the urban neighborhood by placing planters in six different locations along Vine Street. Known as *Portable Landscapes* (2001-2003), the receptacles were recycled suitcases (fig. 78). The suitcases directly referenced the Skyway Luggage Building on the corner of Elliott Avenue and Vine Street. Skyway Luggage has manufactured suitcases since 1940.[508] Not only did the suitcases reference the building, the plants that Simpson grew inside them came from

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[506] Geise, et al., *Growing Vine Street Revisited 2004*, 4.

[507] Lisa Owens Viani, "Does Not Drain to Bay: How Come Seattle Handles Stormwater So Much Better," *Ecology Center* 7 (Summer 2007): 53-54. This article compares the San Francisco Bay Area's rainwater waste to Seattle's.

[508] The Skyway Luggage Building was built in 1910 as a factory for the Puget Investment Company. In the 1930s, the United States Radiator Corporation occupied the building. In 1940, it was remodeled again to house the Seattle Luggage Corporation, which presently uses the building. Walt Crowley and Paul Dorpat, *National Trust Guide, Seattle: America's Guide for Architecture and History Travelers* (Seattle, WA: John Wiley and Sons, 1998).

the volunteer growth on the rooftop of the building. The roof supports an antiquated water tower platform, which had sat unused for fifty years. Over the decades, a little garden of volunteer moss and grass grew in less than a foot of accumulated soil in the dilapidated structure.[509] Simpson notes, "We recognized that this repository could provide a seed stock for future neighborhood green roofs. This landscape was a survivor specific to the ecosystem of this particular urban environment."[510] Naming the water tower platform the *Skyway Seedbank* (2000), the team used the natural growth to start the suitcase planters along the street (fig. 79). Reusing the suitcases also made reference to sustainability. Although suitcases are designed to carry clothes and objects to and from a place, Simpson found another use for them. Reusing what would otherwise end up in a landfill ties in nicely with the theme of reusing resources along the street.

In the *Portable Landscapes,* the team replanted the roof's sod in the suitcases (fig. 78). The volunteer seedlings were basically uncultivated, so the lower level suitcases were planted with more aesthetically pleasing plants such as petunias and pansies.[511] Due to the juxtaposition of flowers and weeds, Simpson suggested that the suitcases represented a "neighborhood in demographic transition."[512] The weeds represented the long-time blue-collar residents who were struggling to co-exist with the new young professional population, symbolized by the petunias and pansies on the bottom tier. From 2001 to 2003, the planters decorated Vine Street's corners. By bringing nature to the street, the planters symbolically dealt with local socioeconomic issues.[513]

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[509] Simpson, 61.

[510] Ibid.

[511] Ibid.

[512] Ibid. These suitcases were also exhibited in an installation at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle in 2000-2001.

[513] According to Simpson, one business owner along Vine Street, who "failed to grasp the concept," had all but one of the planters removed in 2003. Ibid., 57.

Similar in concept to the suitcase planters, steel barrels were also used to hold greenery. Pyramids of fifty-five gallon steel barrels were joined together and strapped to a platform (fig. 80). The team placed three pyramids of *Barrel Planters* at the end of Vine Street near the train tracks. The site-specific sculpture referenced the former transport of canned salmon from the now abandoned American Can Company to the Alaskan Way waterfront. In reference to the company's past, Simpson wrote the word "purge" in perforated holes on the barrels. The word "purge" is used symbolically, for during the industrial height of the waterway, toxins were often purged into Puget Sound. Now, this sculpture brings vegetation to the industrial center of Seattle and reflects a sustainable approach by reusing barrels that would otherwise be destined for the landfill.

As of 2004, the *Growing Vine Street* project had met its goals of bringing nature to the Belltown neighborhood by providing alternative methods for water recycling. The installation was made possible by financial help from grants and awards and by physical assistance from neighborhood residents and volunteers.[514] The community and the design team together created a sustainable Vine Street. The team demonstrated that recycling rainwater can be accomplished and that reusing grey water is a viable option for cities and neighborhoods. Without the help of many minds and hands, the project would not have been successful.

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[514] In 1999, the project received the Ahwahnee Award for working for sustainable design and smart growth, and in 2003, it received the Seattle Design Commission Commendation. The project's materialization is recorded in numerous journals, newspapers and interviews. To promote the team's ideas, Carolyn Geise began presentations about Vine Street in 1998, and continues to consistently be invited to conferences and other urban centers today. Also, the Director of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods, John Diers, presented these ideas internationally during the time he held office. Grants they have received amount to nearly $800,000. Contributions come in large numbers from Opportunity Grants, and in smaller numbers with private donations from contributions from the neighborhoods. Diers promoted the Vine Street Project at conferences in Paris, Havana, Victoria, Tokyo, and Kyoto, as well as in cities across the United States. See Geise, et al., *Growing Vine Street Revisited 2004*, 42.

Growing Vine Street uses a bio-filtration process that improves water quality.[515] It suggests that grey water storage facilities could be a practical advantage for other communities. By making the path of water transparent, sustainability is seen and less easily ignored. By achieving a creative and aesthetically pleasing work of art, Simpson and his team succeeded in making a small street stand out as an emblem for ecological change.

King Street Gardens

Akin to *Growing Vine Street,* the *King Street Gardens* is a collaborative ecological art project, yet placed in Alexandria, Virginia. It too brings "nature back into the city."[516] Simpson and his artistic team merged urban and natural life, and, in the end, revitalized both (fig. 81).[517] Like *Growing Vine Street,* the *King Street Gardens* made the natural cycle of water visible to the community. But instead of highlighting cisterns and rainspouts, the installation reveals the ecological and geographical history of the place. The garden is designed around the underground stream that has been flowing beneath the city of Alexandria for centuries. Simpson and his team created their design to shed light on this overlooked aspect of the city.

Simpson worked with four other Seattle professionals: his wife and sculptor Laura Sindell, architect Mark Spitzer, and Becca Hanson, a landscape architect who represented the Portico Group Landscape Architects. The team was chosen in May of 1990 in a two-stage competition sponsored by the City of Alexandria to revitalize a park in the city

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[515] Ibid., 41.

[516] Craig S. Campbell and Michael H. Ogden, *Constructed Wetlands in the Sustainable Landscape* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999), 223.

[517] Ibid.

center.[518] The team received a small .15 acre strip of land from the seventy-five acres of Alexandria's urban area set aside for redevelopment. They were granted the largest available Arts in Public Places Award sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts.[519] The project was finished and dedicated in 1997.

The *King Street Gardens* are not a city park in the traditional sense. They are made up of three elements: the Topiary Garden, the Sunken Garden, and the Hanging Garden (fig. 82). The Topiary Garden symbolizes the site's historical past. The Sunken Garden revitalizes the ecology of the area by regenerating and recycling rainwater. The Hanging Garden is a place for the community to gather to experience nature within a city. The gardens as a whole visually emphasize the ecology of a neighborhood in Alexandria.

The Topiary Garden: Incorporating the Historical Past

Alexandria was settled in 1749.[520] Over time, the city's streets were paved, and the surrounding wetlands were drained. George Washington included Alexandria in an early survey (fig. 83).[521] The swamp channeled the water into an underground natural stream called Hooff's Run. Today, Hooff's Run flows under the city through a culvert, which exits at Duke Street. The garden is positioned in a triangular plot bordered by

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[518] Deering Davis, Stephen P. Dorsey, and Ralph Cole Hall, *Alexandria Houses, 1750-1830* (Cornwall, NY: Cornwall Press, 1946), 9.

[519] Marlin G. Lord, letter to author, 22 May 2008. Marlin Lord is the Treasurer of the King Street Gardens Foundations and was involved in the planning stage of the installation.

[520] Alexandria became a town on July 13, 1749. A public sale ended in thirty-one lots at the bargain being sold at the price of twenty dollars. The town was named after John Alexander, who first purchased the land from Robert Howsing for 600 pounds of tobacco. See, Mary Gregory Powell, *The History of Old Alexandria, Virginia, from July 13, 1749 to May 24, 1861* (Alexandria, VA: Alexandria Library, 1962).

[521] Lord, letter to author. George Washington helped establish the boundaries of the town of Alexandria at the early age of seventeen. He was assisted by the County Surveyor, John West. See Davis, Dorsey, and Hall, 9.

Daingerfield Road, King Street, and Diagonal Road; the stream still flows directly beneath the pavement.

Along with the history of the land, the history of colonization was also incorporated into the Topiary Garden. Instead of creating a typical park with a flat green surface, the team inverted the green space, making it vertical as well as horizontal (fig. 84). They fashioned a large thirty-five-foot-tall trellis that had both a practical and a symbolic purpose (fig. 85). The wall of green plants shades pedestrians while blocking noise from traffic on the surrounding streets. The curvilinear shape can symbolize a colonial tri-cornered hat, a plow, or a ship's prow.[522] In these three emblematic interpretations, the vertical structure references the Virginia colonists. Viewed as either a plow or a prow, the form also makes reference to Alexandria's progress over the years by linking the design to the city's economic infrastructure.[523]

Planted vines now grow over the trellis forming a "living tapestry."[524] The team planted Virginia Creeper vines chosen for its appropriate name as well as its prolific climbing abilities (fig. 86). The plant symbolizes the early settlers' vast colonization, for this species of ivy is known for quickly spreading and suffocating other plants due to the shade it produces. Virginia Creeper, too, as with most ivy, holds a tight grip on anything it climbs, and needs to be pulled up by the roots in order to be killed.[525] The resilient plant—and people—have withstood the test of time in Alexandria. Despite the invasive

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[522] Barbara C. Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies* (New York: Queens Museum of Art and Rizzoli International, 1992), 96.

[523] Buster Simpson, "King Street Gardens," Artist's statement, 1997.

[524] The trellis is made of epoxy-coated metal poles, which are painted the same color as the ivy. A wire rope weaves between the poles, forming a base for which the plant can climb. The poles are set firmly in concrete. See Campbell, 225.

[525] Donald Wyman, *Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 390.

properties of the ivy, it does have benefits. The plant blooms into bright crimson flowers in the fall, producing a beautiful effect as well as providing food for birds. The climbing vine also produces shade, which is desirable for the garden space. The Topiary Gardens also contains park benches and movable seating placed around a performance area.[526] The foliage protects the park visitors from the hot, summer sun.

Simpson points out that, because George Washington created the layout of the plan for Alexandria, he may in fact have defined the boundaries of the park.[527] Along with the allusion of the tri-cornered hat, the team also included more direct references to the first president. Three "Points of View" plaques are placed at the three corners of the garden. One bronze plaque is shaped with a curvilinear form on the left side and a cubed form on the right. Words are written one on top of the other in a vertical linear fashion:

> Lift up a layer of the landscape
> join the city present
> with nature past
> George Washington surveyor
> our tricorner garden
> is made to your measure.[528]

The words and the sculptural form pay homage to both the past president and to the former landscape that is now covered with concrete.

The Sunken Garden: Revitalizing the Ecology

Adjacent to the Topiary Garden is a section entitled the Sunken Garden, which consists of a reclaimed marsh (fig. 87). Before the establishment of Alexandria, this low-lying area was near the Potomac River. Connected to the marshland was an underground

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[526] Matilsky, 96.

[527] One map, made by Colonel George Gilpin in 1798, actually shows the triangular plot that now consists of the park. In the map, there are only two triangular plots; all the other city blocks are square. See Davis, Dorsey, and Hall, 22.

[528] Buster Simpson, "King Street Gardens," 1997, unpublished artist's statement.

natural stream called Hooff's Run. Today, Hooff's Run is funneled through a concrete culvert. Simpson was fascinated by that fact that the natural stream still flowed beneath the city. Thus, he and his team chose to integrate this aspect of the site into the function of the garden.[529] The design serves as a transition between the "urban" and the "natural" environment. The team designed a sunken space that would hold rainwater and grow cattails. The area would function as a marsh.

The idea behind the marsh is twofold: it provides visual interest to pedestrians, and it collects rainwater that funnels into Hooff's Run.[530] Both aspects of the Sunken Garden draw attention to the otherwise invisible ecology of the site. The environmental aspect of the work involves acknowledging the history of the underground stream and using the stream as an alternative path for rainwater. Throughout the years, residents of Alexandria not only paved over the wetland and contained the underground stream in concrete, they also polluted the water by using it as a garbage dump.[531] Nearby slaughterhouses used the culvert as a sewer at one time as well. The design team thought it would be appropriate to re-open Hooff's Run to become part of the gardens. After analyzing the area, however, they realized the culvert was buried ten feet beneath the surface.[532] As architect Mark Spitzer notes:

> All this fascination with water came from our desire to reveal the history of the site, but also to say something about how water is handled currently. A stream and a wetland through that part of

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[529] Lord, letter to author.

[530] Spitzer, letter to author.

[531] Ibid.

[532] Ibid. The first idea was to capture the water in the culvert upstream, and design pipes to funnel the water back into the park. When the first idea was too complex, they turned their sight to create a fountain in the marsh that would use the run-off from the surrounding rooftops in order to feed the fountain. That idea, too, did not materialize, for it proved impossible to engineer. The final idea to create a marsh in the middle of the park was feasible.

> Alexandria today would be an incredible amenity, but unfortunately too many buildings make that impossible.[533]

Although the team did not uncover the underground stream, they creatively designed their gardens to funnel rainwater into Hooff's Run, which brought attention to the life that lies beneath the surface.

Not only did the team bring attention to the natural ecological system, they also used innovative methods in order to rid the stream of pollutants. To "ready" the water for their installation, Simpson created sculptures entitled *Bromo Seltzers,* which he placed in Hooff's Run. Similar in concept to his *Hudson River Purge,* explained previously in Chapter Three, the *Bromo Seltzers* were large, limestone tablets that he placed in the water to help neutralize the acidic pH.[534] To visually attract pedestrians, the team created whimsical sculptures and planted wetland vegetation. The wetland aspects of the Sunken Garden consisted of cattails and River Birch trees.[535] Visually, the trees serve as a reminder of the birch trees that often flank wild wetland streams.[536] Cattails were also planted to signify the primordial wetlands and to encourage wildlife, such as red-winged blackbirds, to return to the marsh.[537]

But the benefits from the marshland extend beyond birch trees and blackbirds. Biologists, for years, have touted the recycling properties of marshes. Due to their highly productive nature, marshland aquatic plants act as filters and advance the uptake of toxins

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[533] Ibid.

[534] Lord, letter to author. For more information about limestone tablets similar to his "Bromo Seltzers," see Chapter Three, which discusses his environmental work entitled *Hudson River Purge* from 1991.

[535] Ibid.

[536] Campbell, 225.

[537] Ibid.

from the water.[538] Certain marsh vegetation has properties that can absorb toxins and restore eutrophic waters.[539] Natural aquatic systems are efficient. They use solar energy to remove contaminants.[540]

Turning waste water into clean water with the help of plants is not a new concept. Solar and wetland aquatic treatment systems were developed in the 1980s and 1990s that employed bacteria and algae to clean sewage waste.[541] A ten-day cycle took wastewater through a series of clear, plastic tanks, each one representing its own ecosystem. The bacteria and algae, fueled by sunlight, eat organic toxins and convert the ammonia to nitrate. Nitrates feed water plants, which live happily in the aquatic system. As Michael Hough notes, the benefits of having a solar aquatic system are both cost and land efficient, which causes dirty water to be seen as a "resource" rather than a "waste."[542] Although this invisible path of cleansing cannot be seen in the *King Street Gardens,* Simpson and his team created a marsh—prominently featured in the center of Alexandria—as an aquatic filter and funnel to the underground stream below.

The Sunken Garden incorporates this natural water filtration aspect into the design of the park. The perimeter of the Sunken Garden is surrounded by a brick-lined

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[538] Hough, 69. For more information, see Shanta Saha and B. B. Jana, "Determination of Water Hyacinth Biomass/Water Area Ration for Effective Reclamation in Simulated Models of Wastewater at Two Nutrient Levels," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 59 (October 2002): 623-35. This article discusses the benefits of water hyacinths in reclaiming eutrophic water. Eutrophic water is rich in organic materials, making the water healthy for plant and animal life.

[539] Hough, 70.

[540] Ibid.

[541] Also see, C. H. House, B. A. Bergmann, A. M. Stomp, and D. J. Frederick, "Combining Constructed Wetlands and Aquatic and Soil Filters for Reclamation and Reuse of Water," *Ecological Engineering* 12 (January 1999): 27-38. This article describes how "constructed wetlands can provide water quality suitable for reuse."

[542] Hough, 71.

slope between the raised sidewalk and the deep-set wetlands. Because the Sunken Garden lies at a lower elevation than the sidewalk, the bricked slope provides a transition between the places reserved for people and for nature.[543] The patterns in the bricks emphasize the circulation and the drainage of the Sunken Garden. The bricks used were either recycled from other projects or individually bought by community members as a donation to the project. Although many of the bricks look alike, some came from alleyways and backyards and others from dilapidated houses.[544] The team actually favored the donated gifts and arranged the new bricks around the older ones that had a history. This unique inclusion adds another element of community connectivity—some of the bricks the pedestrians now walk on came from past buildings from the city of Alexandria.

The bricks circle around two plaques placed into the arranged bricks. Both plaques sit flush with the bricks and are connected to the site (fig. 24). One of the plaques, positioned on the corner of the lot, is shaped as a wedge topped with a wavy line. The poetic inscription reads:

> Rainwater collects in the marsh,
> reviving cattails, drawing redwing blackbirds.
> A wild stream
> flowing hidden beneath you
> is replenished.

The poem encapsulates the ecological importance and purpose of the garden's particular location.

Another nearby plaque pays homage to the site's historical past while simultaneously functioning as a drain to funnel water into Hooff's Run. The drain inlet is surrounded by bricks (fig. 25). The plaque resembles a map of Alexandria. The town's

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[543] Campbell, 224.

[544] Ibid., 226.

name and surrounding rivers are inscribed. The word "Alexandria" is written across the peninsula-like land in large text next to two rivers, the "Potomack" and "Hunting Creek." The inclusion of the extra "k" at the end of "Potomack" is a historical nod, for early settlers used the additional letter when referencing the river.[545] Hunting Creek is a tributary of the Potomac River, formed by the confluence of Hooff's Run and Cameron Run. The inclusion of the site's land and rivers on the plaque is yet another detail which ties the garden to its historical roots.

The plaque is more than just an aesthetic element; it functions as a drain that truly connects the garden to its site. Instead of only superficially noting the history of Hooff's Run, the drain allows water to flow into the underground cistern. The rainwater accumulates in the Sunken Garden, which feeds the birch trees and other wetland plants. When the water is too high, the excess is drained through the spaces near the plaque, and is funneled into Hooff's Run.

This section of the garden revitalizes the ecology of the area through regenerating a wetland that was once present. The stream is now in the design of the Sunken Garden. By making the ecological history visible, Simpson and his team hope community residents will take ownership of their park and care for their land.

The Hanging Gardens: The Community Gathering Place

The Hanging Gardens offer a communal space among lush vines (fig. 26). This idea stems from Alexandria's history. In the 1800s, when the city was bustling with business, both social and professional gatherings took place in trellised gardens boarded

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[545] An early surveyor, Benjamin Winslow, included an extra "k" on "Potomack" as early as 1736. See Benjamin Winslow, "Plan of the upper part of Potomack River called Cohongorooto. Survey'd in the Year 1736 [signed:] Benj. Winslow," in James W. Foster, "Maps of the First Survey of the Potomac River, 1736-37," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* 18 (April 1938): 150-57.

by ivy clad walls.[546] Before air conditioning, restaurants, inns, and businesses offered shaded outdoor areas instead of stuffy and enclosed spaces.[547] Years later, air conditioning is ubiquitous. The design team consciously recreated natural air conditioning to encourage community members to use outdoor social spaces.

The trellises are shaped in the form of diamonds, which are connected to one another by the points. Vines grow up the spiraled poles and across the trellis. Due to the fast-growing nature of the vines, shade is soon provided. Beneath the trellis is the same brick pavement shared with the other two sections of the garden. There is a plaque set into the brick in the Hanging Garden area as well. This plaque has a triangular point. The opposite end has a line of beige colored bricks that form a line. Because lighter bricks form a band, which leads to the triangular point of the plaque in the pavement, it resembles a Native American arrowhead. It reads:

> Spring
> the garden walls aloft
> blooming in aromatic profusion.
> Light falls dappled
> on neighbors' greetings,
> in shades of social traditions.

The area is currently used for evening musical entertainment, lunch time for workers from the King Street Station, and other free events.[548] The King Street Metro Enterprise Team (KSMET), in collaboration with the City of Alexandria, also organizes non-profit dinners that they called "Supper Under the Stars." Circular tables with fancy tablecloths are placed beneath the trellis, and live music serenaded the guests.[549] Created

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[546] Buster Simpson, "King Street Gardens," Artist's statement, 1997.

[547] Ibid.

[548] Lord, letter to author.

[549] Ibid.

as a community space, the *King Street Gardens* are a vibrant addition to the neighborhood.

Functionality of the *King Street Gardens*

In order to build work of this complexity and scale, funding was achieved through donations from the public, grants from the Virginia Department of Transportation through the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grant program, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the City of Alexandria. The King Street Metro Enterprise Team sold signature bricks to raise money for the park. Volunteers on the King Street Gardens Park Committee also helped with fundraising.[550] Along with national grants, the project's ideas were disseminated through traveling exhibitions. In 1992, the Smithsonian included the *King Street Gardens* as part of the "Fragile Ecologies" traveling exhibition that toured ten cities. In 1993, the Harvard School of Design hosted two invitational presentations about the design and concept of the gardens. The Tate Gallery in London, in 1994, also held an invitational presentation about the *King Street Gardens* as well.[551]

The City of Alexandria now maintains the park, which is costly.[552] Despite these financial challenges, the city continues to promote the use of this green haven. They have organized community celebrations, art festivals, and live music in the park. They have also incorporated the park in tourist and historic brochures in order to attract visitors.

The *King Street Gardens* offer an experience for community members and visitors. Although the gardens were constructed by humans and not by nature, they

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[550] Ibid.

[551] Ibid.

[552] Ibid. At the time, the improvements which needed to be made consisted of better lighting and adding irrigation.

highlight the natural history of the place. The functionality of the garden also extends beyond what is actually seen, for the invisible process of filtration is also demonstrated and emphasized in the artwork.

This garden can be used as an educational tool to promote wastewater recycling. Although, as expressed earlier, such aquatic systems have been in use for the past thirty years, they have not become mainstream. As Michael Hough argues, "government resistance to adopting such systems is also inevitable since their operation requires a very different type of expertise."[553] Alternative methods for water filtration, however, will be essential in years to come. Sewage treatment plants are understandably placed in inconspicuous places, but putting a garden, which functionally filters water in a city park, brings attention to infrastructural designs that can have both great beauty and great utility.

My argument is *not* to suggest that wastewater be treated in the center of cities; instead, I claim that Simpson's input in the *King Street Gardens* did more than just add greenery to a city square. By making the invisible water filtration path a center focus of his work, he revealed an important aspect of the neighborhood. By respecting underground systems, people can change their own actions and help make their rivers and streams more healthy. Going one step further, if city dwellers become aware of ecological alternatives—which can only happen through education, research, and dialogue—they can change the world.

As seen in the examples of the *Growing Vine Street* and the *King Street Gardens,* Simpson's installations bring more than just vegetation to city neighborhoods. His *Growing Vine Street* sheds light on the path water travels after a rainstorm. Using cisterns, runnels, and downspouts, the eight-block section of Seattle becomes a visual example of the feasibility of reusing rainwater. The suitcase planters and P-Patch garden

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[553] Hough, 71.

provide proof that a "green street" can survive in the midst of a city. *King Street Gardens,* similarly, provides more than just a green oasis for urban dwellers. The gardens incorporate historical aspects of the land's past in both ecological and historical ways. The design of the Topiary Garden pays heed to George Washington, the plot's past surveyor and the leader of the United States. The Sunken Marsh captures rainwater and allows for the rainwater to drain into the underground waterway instead of through the sewer system. Finally, the Hanging Garden offers a shaded space for neighborhood residents to gather and enjoy one another's company. These two projects were created as didactic tools to foster conversation in the hope of forging action. They provide sustainable solutions that could be implemented on small and large scales within cities to reuse rainwater. Both gardens highlight the water cycle and its importance for the environment both locally and globally.

Figure 64: Belltown P-Patch, Seattle, Washington. Photograph by the author.

Figure 65: The Cannery Cottages before renovation (1997). Glenn MacGilvra, "Belltown P-Patch and Cottage Park," in *Belltown Paradise*, eds. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg, and Anthony Elms (Chicago: WhiteWalls, 2004), 20.

Figure 66: The Cannery Cottages after renovation (2009). Photograph by the author.

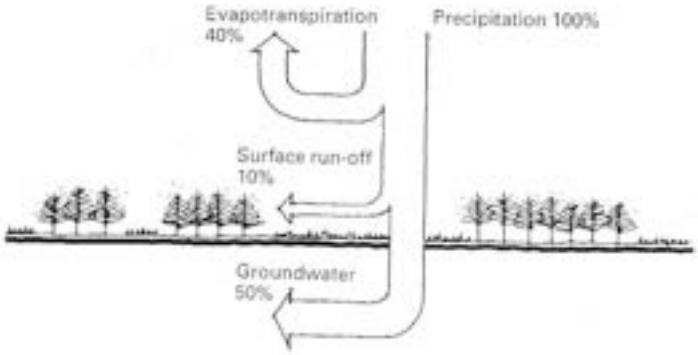

Figure 67: Hydrologic cycle in rural areas. Michael Hough, *Cities and Natural Process: A Basis for Sustainability,* 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 31.

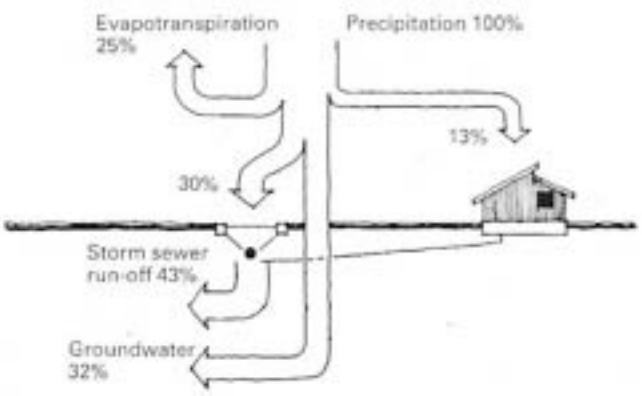

Figure 68: Hydrologic cycle in urban areas. Michael Hough, *Cities and Natural Process: A Basis for Sustainability*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 31.

Figure 69: Plan for *Growing Vine Street.* Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives.

Figure 70: 81 Vine Street Building and *Beckoning Cistern* (2003). Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives.

Figure 71: Rooftop garden on 81 Vine Street. Claire Enlow, "Growing Vine Street Takes Root at 81 Vine," *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* 45 (September 5, 2001): 23.

Figure 72: Buster Simpson, *Vertical Downspouts* (1999). Photograph by the author.

Figure 73: Buster Simpson, *Beckoning Cistern* (2003). Photograph by the author.

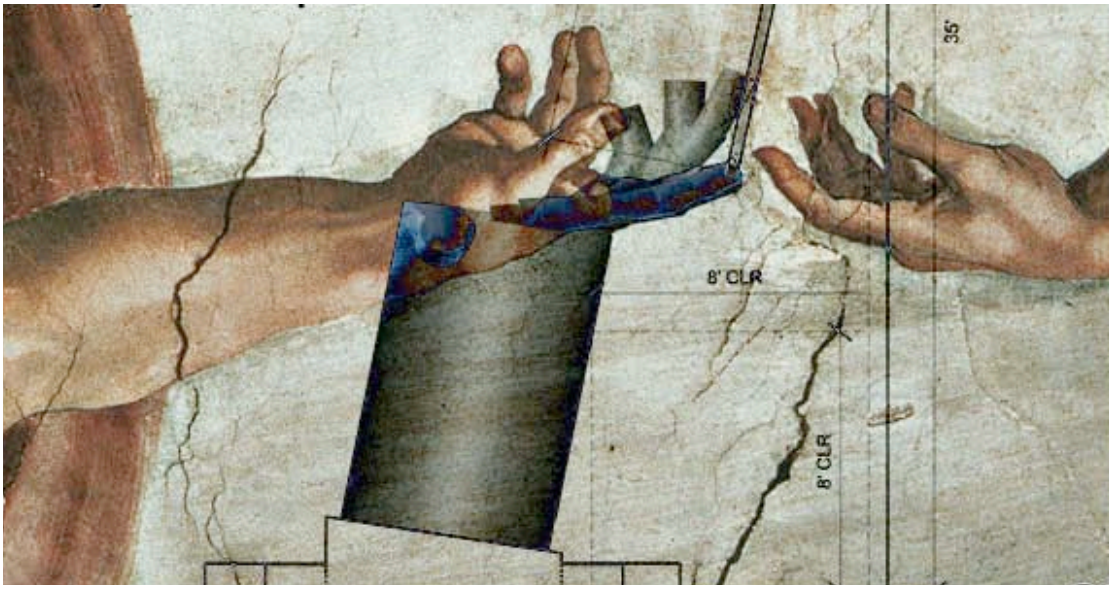

Figure 74: Superimposed image of *Beckoning Cistern* on Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. Ceiling. Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives.

Figure 75: Buster Simpson, *Beckoning Cistern* (2003) and runnel. Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives.

Figure 76: *Runnel* (2003). Photograph by the author.

Figure 77: *Cistern Steps* (2001). Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives.

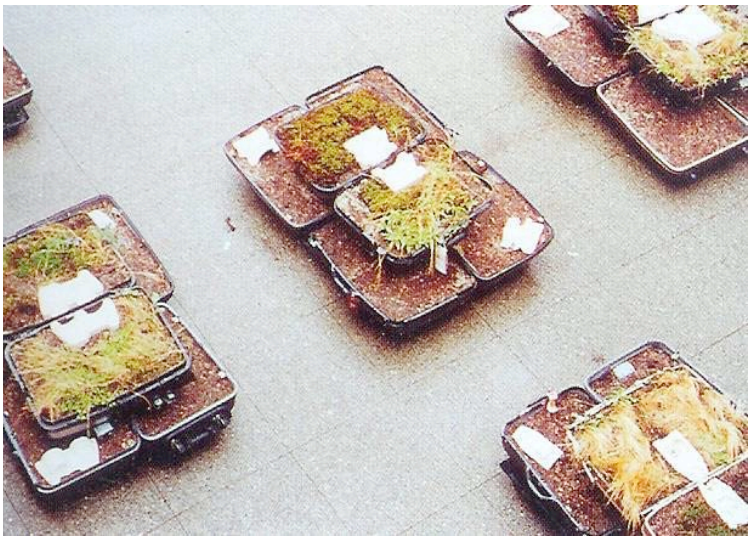

Figure 78: Buster Simpson, *Portable Landscapes* (2001-2003). Buster Simpson, "Perpendicular and Parallel Streetscape Stories," in *Belltown Paradise*, eds. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg, and Anthony Elms (Chicago: WhiteWalls, 2004), 56.

Figure 79: Buster Simpson, *Skyway Seedbank* (2000). Buster Simpson, "Perpendicular and Parallel Streetscape Stories," in *Belltown Paradise*, eds. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg, and Anthony Elms (Chicago: WhiteWalls, 2004), 56.

Figure 80: Buster Simpson, *Barrel Planters* (2001). Buster Simpson, "Perpendicular and Parallel Streetscape Stories," in *Belltown Paradise*, eds. Brett Bloom, Ava Bromberg, and Anthony Elms (Chicago: WhiteWalls, 2004), 56.

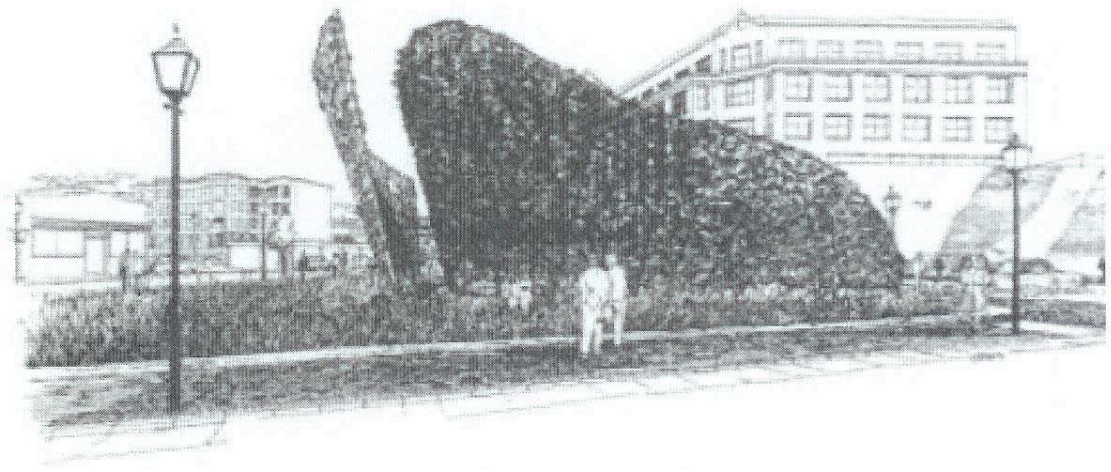

Figure 81: Overview of *King Street Gardens*. Craig S. Campbell and Michael H. Ogden, *Constructed Wetlands in the Sustainable Landscape* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999), 224.

Figure 82: Image of *King Street Gardens.* Photograph by Rachel Stephens.

Figure 83: The map of Alexandria drawn in 1749 by George Washington, aged 17. In the collection of the Library of Congress.

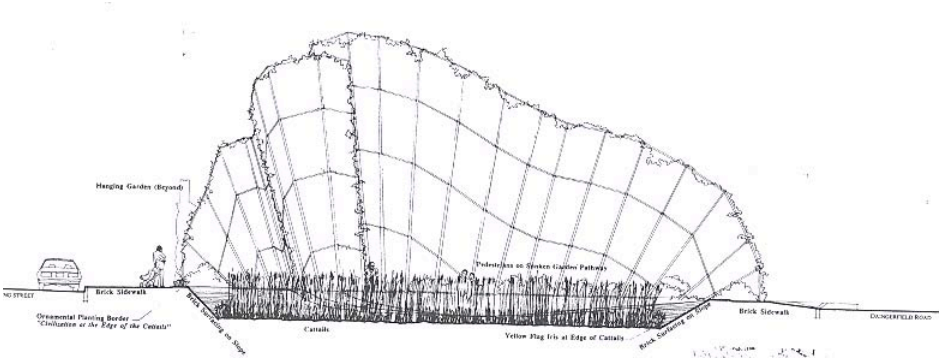

Figure 84: Topiary Garden Plan. Craig S. Campbell and Michael H. Ogden, *Constructed Wetlands in the Sustainable Landscape* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999), 225.

Figure 85: *Topiary Garden.* Photograph by Rachel Stephens.

Figure 86: Virginia Creeper. Photograph by Rachel Stephens.

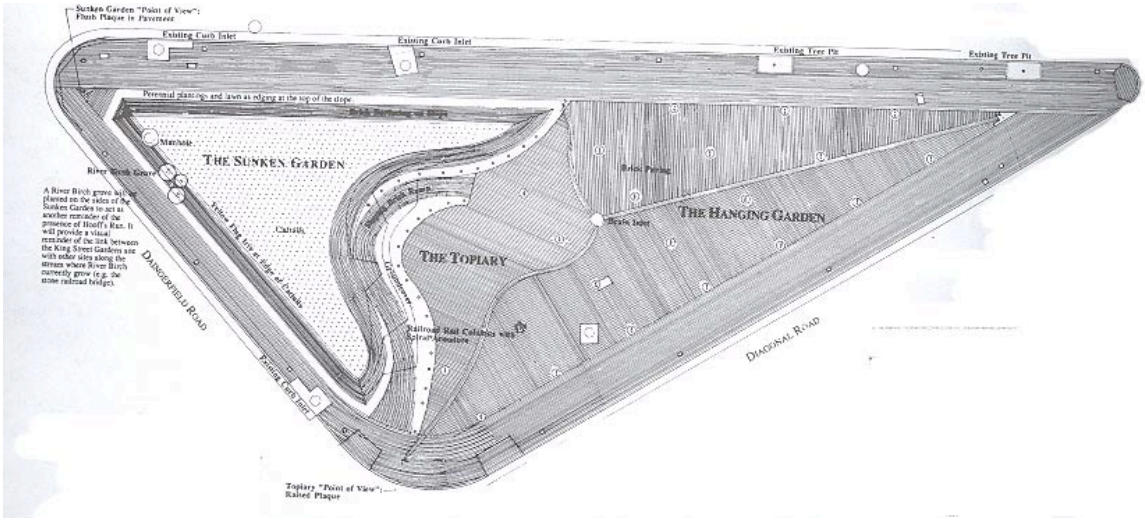

Figure 87: Sunken Garden Plan. Craig S. Campbell and Michael H. Ogden, *Constructed Wetlands in the Sustainable Landscape* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999), 226.

Figure 88: *Plaque.* Photograph by Rachel Stephens

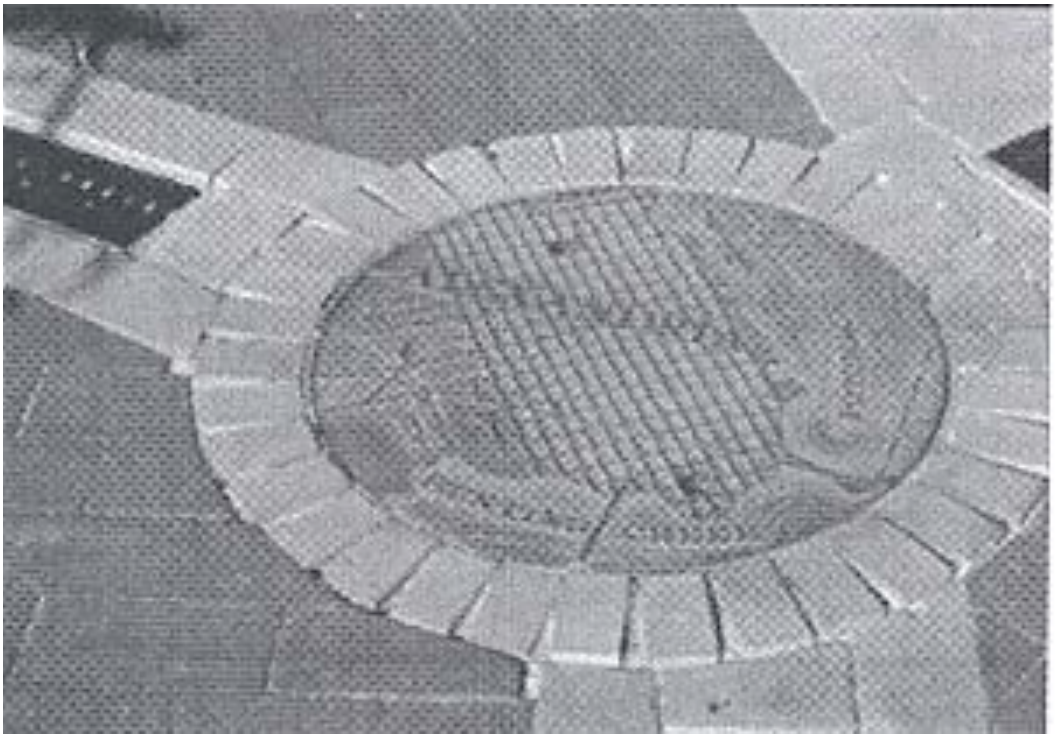

Figure 89: *Drain Plaque*. Property of Buster Simpson, Buster Simpson's archives

Figure 90: *Hanging Garden.* Photograph by Rachel Stephens.

CHAPTER 5: BUSTER'S "ART MASTER PLANS": A UTOPIAN MANIFESTO

As a self-proclaimed "provocateur," Simpson has promoted his ideas about environmentalism, education, and community betterment in what he calls his "Art Master Plans." These plans consist of detailed instructions telling the reader how art can be used in public spaces to revitalize communities. They are available in the form of downloadable personal document formats (PDFs) that outline public art projects and urban renewal schemes. They discuss matters such as how to clean up polluted waterfronts or make a particular neighborhood more sustainable. Simpson's Master Plans are also important because they provide a retrospective look at Simpson's career and they incorporate several of the key themes with which he has been engaged over the past forty years. Moreover, his plans are his personal manifesto, and although they may sometimes be utopian, they can in fact function as catalysts for healing and nurturing urban areas. Through his Master Plans, Simpson also questions the role of the artist in the twenty-first century, suggesting that the artist be less concerned with objects and personal recognition and be more focused on the greater needs of society.

Simpson's Master Plans are designed for specific communities, and although they have not been realized, they can be. If a motivated team desires to bring a project to fruition, they can download the plans and use them so long as they give credit to Simpson. Simpson is an artist who hopes to usher in a new world—a world that understands and cares about ecology. I argue that Simpson's Master Plans are his utopian manifesto: they provide concrete plans for the remediation or conservation of urban sites.

Simpson's plans promote reusing buildings and materials. Three Master Plans for three neighborhoods will be discussed in this chapter. The first, *Levee as Armature: Towards Art, Ecology and Community* (2002), is a 41 page document detailing ways for Santa Cruz, California, to restore the San Lorenzo River. The plan focuses on improving

a neglected riverway. Because a levee borders the river, the actual waterway is hidden from public view. Along its course, crime and environmental degradation is rampant. Simpson's plan makes the river more conspicuous in hopes the community will begin to take pride in and ownership of their river. The second Master Plan, created for Portland, Oregon, is entitled *Portland South Waterfront Greenway* (2004). Similar to the Santa Cruz's river, Portland's south waterfront, which boarders the Willamette River, has a high level of pollution. Due to the city's industrial past, many of the abandoned warehouses along the river still have manufacturing wastes piled near them along the water's edge. Simpson provides a Master Plan that reuses these buildings and materials, and he proposes ways to add vegetation to abandoned lots. The third project is his *Southeast False Creek* plan (2007), which is designed for a neighborhood in Vancouver, British Columbia. Again, Simpson chose a neighborhood bordered by water. He suggests making buildings more energy efficient and incorporating vegetation into the fabric of the urban environment.[554]

All three plans have a commonality: promoting community ownership and ecological awareness through art. By placing art in city centers, the hope is that individuals who reside around the area will be inspired and encouraged to care for their environment. Although he is not trained as an urban planner or landscape architect, Simpson incorporates elements of both fields into his plans by adding sustainable elements and designing with plants and trees. But takes his plans a step further. They also

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[554] Along with the three Master Plans discussed in this chapter, Simpson also created three others, "Bainbridge Island: Public Art on Winslow Way and Olympic Drive, Bainbridge Island, Washington," with Maggie Smith in 2003; "Brightwater Treatment System" in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources and Parks and the Cultural Development Authority of King County," with Jann Rosen-Queralt and Ellen Sollod in 2003; and "Flamingo Arroyo Train: Public Art and Design Plan," for the city of Las Vegas, with Kevin S. Berry and Barbara Grygutis in 2004. I chose to focus on the three Master Plans in this chapter because they were created solely by Simpson.

contain a utopian element: he suggests ways for the community to become better connected to the world they inhabit.

Analysis of Personal Document Format

Attached to nearly all recent newspaper or journal articles written about Simpson is his website: www.bustersimpson.net (fig. 91). Available to anyone with internet access, his personal website contains links showing his public sculpture along with links to his PDFs. The format is simple—it has a black background and white lettering that is linked to his specific projects. In the case of his Master Plans, his website has seven links—each link routes to a different Master Plan, three of which will be discussed in this chapter (fig. 92). Each document contains between 20 and 40 pages that can be printed out or viewed directly on the computer for the viewer's convenience.

Each PDF is unique; all were written by Simpson and contain digital images that consist of sketches, photographs of his past work, and references to work by other artists. Simpson's text is paired with the images; it explains his projects in detail. The text describes each individual work and the ideas behind it. Simpson also includes information about the best materials to use, and how to implement the design into the particular urban setting. The overarching idea that combines all of the Master Plans, however, is Simpson's belief that neighborhoods should be nurtured.

The Examination of a Manifesto

A manifesto is a public declaration of ideas. Through time, manifestos have advocated political or religious ideas, and artists have used them to promote their artistic agendas.[555] Tristan Tzara, in his Dadaist poem, *Feeble and Bitter Love, II*, wrote about the purpose of such proclamations:

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[555] The United States Declaration of Independence (1776) and The Communist Manifesto (1848) are just two of many documents that have affected the lives of many. Other manifestos that were notable in time were the *Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789),

> A manifesto is a communication made to the whole world, whose only pretension is to the discovery of an instant cure for political, astronomical, artistic, parliamentary, agronomical and literary syphilis. It may be pleasant, and good natured, it's always right, it's strong, vigorous and logical.[556]

The first art manifesto in the twentieth century was written by the Italian Futurists in 1909.[557] Following their lead, Vorticists, Dadaists, De Stijl artists, and Surrealists created statements of their own.[558] More recently, contemporary artists have also used this tactic to describe their work. Claus Oldenburg proclaimed his "I am for an Art. . . . Manifesto," in 1961 as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism.[559] The Fluxus Manifesto was written in 1963. Merle Laderman Ukeles performed her "Maintenance Art

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written during the French Revolution and the *1890 Manifesto*, written by Wilford Woodruff, proclaimed the rights of Mormons to have plural marriages. For books cataloguing historical manifestos, see Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow, eds., *Manifestos for History* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[556] This manifesto was originally published in French: Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos* (Paris: Editions Jean Budry, 1924). It was translated by Ralph Manheim and included in Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 89.

[557] The Futurist Manifesto was published on February 20, 1909, by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Futurism favored speed, machinery, and industry. For more information, see Peter Nicholls, "A Metaphysics of Modernity: Marinetti and Futurism," chapter 5, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

[558] The Vorticists published their manifesto in a magazine entitled *Blast* on June 20, 1914. The Vorticists are considered to be the first modern art movement originating from Britain. For more information, see, Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age: Orgins and Development* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976). Hugo Ball, a Dadaist, performed the first Dada manifesto in 1916. See more information, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 250. The De Stijl artists created "Manifest I of 'The Style'" in 1918. The document had nine points, all supporting a university harmony and unity in visual style. Seven people—one poet, two architects, three painters, and a sculptor—signed the manifesto. See more, Carol Blotkamp, ed. *De Stijl: The Formative Years, 1917-1922* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986). Andre Breton wrote the "Manifesto of Surrealism" in 1924. In it, he defined the term, emphasizing that the images created had a direct connection with dreams and the subconscious. Originally published in 1929, Breton's manifestos were republished years later as: Andre Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972).

[559] This quote came from *Store Days, Documents from the Store* (1961), but republished in Ellen H. Johnson, *American Artists on Art from 1940 to 1980* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 98.

Manifesto" in 1969. She did stereotypical "women's work" to make a feminist statement.[560]

In his Master Plans, Simpson follows the art manifestos of the past, but whereas other art manifestos focus primarily on aesthetics and conceptual approaches of art, his provide a blueprint for a utopian community. Past artistic manifestos often incorporated personal frustrations with the system; Ukeles's "Maintenance Art Manifesto," for example, proclaimed her own discontentment with women's role in society. Simpson combines a non-aesthetic form of argument—akin to the philosophy of Greenpeace or other social reform movements—with a visual form. He then promulgates his hybrid plans in an accessible place (the internet).

Urban Planning

The start of urban planning is not recent. Early Mesopotamians planned their city layouts, as did the ancient Romans and Renaissance Italians. The birth of modern urban planning in England can be traced back to the 1830s and 1840s. City designs were planned as a way to ameliorate living conditions in urban centers.[561] In 1880-90, Ebenezer Howard made a notable contribution to urban planning with the idea of the garden city. He believed the problems of city dwelling would be solved if residents moved to the countryside.[562] This approach led to the "City Beautiful" movement in the

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[560] Ukeles's entire "Maintenance Art Manifesto" is reprinted in Kristine Stiles and Peter Howard Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 622.

[561] Peter Geoffrey Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century,* 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 6. For information about the American history of city planning, see, Jon A. Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[562] Hall, 8. Also see Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, 2nd ed. (London: Sonnenschein and Company, 1902); and Dugald Macfadyen, *Sir Ebenezer Howard and the Town Planning Movement* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970.)

1890s and early 1900s, which promoted city beautification to create virtue and morality among urban residents.[563] In the twentieth century, urban planners have been increasingly interested in issues such as safety (seen in Jane Jacob's "natural surveillance") and sustainability (seen in designs for cities to have a minimal ecological footprint).[564]

Although conversant with these approaches, Simpson differs in his focus. His creations not only change the sustainability of a neighborhood or provide green space in a city, but also spread *awareness* in a visual manner about the environmental quality of communities.

Simpson's Master Plans can also be likened to, but still are quite different from, Frederick Law Olmsted's parks (fig. 93). Olmsted, too, had a vision to bring verdant growth to the city center. Central Park in New York City provides a respite from the chaos of urban life.[565] Simpson also adds vegetation to cities, but he incorporates an *active* element into his designs. His gardens can be harvested, and his community nurseries can be cultivated.

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[563] See, William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

[564] There are a myriad of books written about urban planning. For information about urban decay, see Hans Skifter Anderson, *Urban Sores: On the Interaction between Segregation, Urban Decay, and Deprived Neighbourhoods* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2003); Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York and Toronto: Random House, 1961); and Stephen M. Wheeler, *Planning for Sustainability: Creating Livable, Equitable, and Ecological Communities* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[565] For more information about Olmsted and his Central Park project, see Charles E. Beveridge, Carolyn F. Hoffman, and Kenneth Hawkins, eds., *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Parks, Politics, and Patronage, 1874-1882*, vol. VII (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Charles Capen McLaughlin, ed. *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: The Formative Years, 1822-1852* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); and Laura Wood Roper, *F.L.O.: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

Another influential but unrealized political project that is relevant to Simpson is Vladimir Tatlin's *Model for Monument to the Third International* (1919-20) (fig. 94). This model, created from wood, iron, and glass at a height of twenty feet, was designed to reach thirteen-hundred feet. The structure itself was to house the Communist center of the political party.[566] According to Margit Rowell, the "building's formation was to be not only a synthesis of art and technology, heralding a new society, but a symbol of the unification of all men under communism."[567] Although never built, Tatlin's model lived on through photographs and texts.[568] Like it, Simpson's work has the ability to change minds and to effect the actions of people.

Simpson's Solutions

Incorporating elements of city planning and conservation, Simpson's Master Plans offer artistic ideas about revitalizing communities. Artists, in Simpson's opinion, can benefit city planning through creative thinking. He believes that "artists are communicators, facilitators, problem solvers and inventors."[569] When placed on public commissions, artists can provide new designs and inventive solutions to different problems.[570] Simpson suggests that such work can be a revelation:

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[566] The complex structure was designed as three different shapes—a cylinder, cube, and cone—and each would rotate at a different speed. H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Photography*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 209.

[567] Margit Rowell, "Vladimir Tatlin: Form/Factura," *October,* no. 7 (Winter 1978): 105.

[568] Ibid., 107. Also see Norbert Lynton, *Tatlin's Tower: Monument to Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

[569] Buster Simpson, "Poetic Utility," artist statement, April 1998, 1. This was commissioned by the Seattle Arts Commission and submitted to Seattle Public Utilities. This is another of Simpson's Master Plans, created for Seattle and proposes ways in which drainage and wastewater, solid waste, and pollution can be diminished in the community. It is also found online at: http://www.bustersimpson.net/poeticutility/PoeticUtility.April1998.pdf.

[570] See Chapter 2 in this dissertation for more information on how space-specific public work can benefit the community.

> artists working in the public context often discover, occasionally too late, that this is not necessarily studio work and that the end result is more about the process than about a signature product. They need new tools to examine the potential of this new direction in order to converse successfully.[571]

Simpson's *Poetic Utility* advocates four ways of implementing his Master Plans. Putting together successful teams is essential to the success of each project. Thus, Simpson includes suggestions on how to teach artists to work together. He also provides a model to help find team-oriented artists. He suggests four things cities can do: they can establish "Navigational Boot Camps," create a "Charette du Reality," place "Artists on Retainer," and have them go through a "Peer Review."

"Navigational Boot Camps," would put artists together so that they could learn about both positive and negative past experiences.[572] A "Charette du Reality," which is similar to the "design team," discussed in Chapter 1, would bring together managers, engineers, and design consultants in a "free-wheeling brainstorming session."[573] Artists who submit work for a proposal could be chosen by a city's Arts Commission, and a "Peer Review" would ensure that the right artist would be chosen. Either artists or others on the arts commission board would serve as peer reviewers for "critical but constructive review."[574] Each Master Plan would thus provide examples of how to find artists who are willing to work together.

Although seemingly complicated, this detailed process of choosing an artist is essential for a successful end product. Simpson's plans are recommendations—not rules.

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[571] Simpson, "Poetic Utility," 2.

[572] Ibid., 1. In his statement, Simpson cites Lewis Hyde's books that promote creativity. See Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (London: Vintage Books, 1983) and *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998). Hyde's *The Gift* was also published in 1983 by Random House with a different subtitle: *Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property.*

[573] Ibid., 2.

[574] Ibid., 3.

They can be molded to fit specific environments. The artist creates a springboard—not a doctrine—for the application of ideas.

Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology, and Community

In 2002, Simpson created a Master Plan to remediate the river in Santa Cruz, California (fig. 95). He was added to the team of the San Lorenzo Urban River Plan Task Force to contribute ideas for the San Lorenzo River Design Concept Plan and the San Lorenzo River Enhancement Plan. The city implemented a task force because the river's polluted water threatened steelhead trout and Coho salmon species.[575] Because the US Army Corps of Engineering had already begun construction on the levees, a task force was needed to "develop programs and projects that would further enhance the habitat, safety, and aesthetics of the San Lorenzo River within City Limits."[576]

Over the past fifty years, the health of the San Lorenzo River had declined. In the early 1900s, timber and logging companies took over the upper river. In 1960, the Loch Lomond reservoir was created to ensure that downtown businesses would not flood. The Corps of Engineers also built levees to contain the river as it flowed through town.[577] From 1970 to 1990, the San Lorenzo Valley grew because a University of California campus was established in Santa Cruz.[578] The most drastic change to the river occurred

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[575] For information about these endangered species, see Laurie A. Weitkamp, *Status Review of Coho Salmon from Washington, Oregon, and California* (Seattle, WA: U. S. Department of Commerce, 2001), 169; and Deanna J. Stouder, Peter A. Bisson, and Robert J. Naiman, *Pacific Salmon and Their Ecosystems: Status and Future Options* (New York: Chapman and Hall, 1997), 110.

[576] This statement is written in an executive summary prepared by the City of Santa Cruz with assistance from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service, entitled "San Lorenzo Urban River Plan." It was adopted on June 24, 2003. It can be found on their city's official website: http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us.

[577] Richard Gendron and G. William Domhoff, *The Leftmost City: Power and Progressive Politics in Santa Cruz* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 48.

[578] The growth of the city and population stemmed from the development of a new University of California campus in Santa Cruz. In October of 1957, six-hundred acres from ranch

in the period of 1957-59, when the US Army Corps of Engineers channelized the lower three miles of the river into a levee control system. Two nearby waterways were also impacted by this levee—Jessie Street Marsh was filled, and Branciforte Creek was channelized through a cement culvert.[579] These alterations decreased water quality and increased sedimentation. Additionally, filling the marsh caused substantial loss of wildlife habitat. In 1982, after the river came extremely close to overflowing its banks, the Corps of Engineers straightened the picturesque curving river to decrease the risk of flooding. The river's size gradually decreased throughout the next thirty years, as Santa Cruz's growing population demanded more water (fig. 96).[580]

Recently, the city of Santa Cruz has become concerned about the health of the land and also the safety of the city's inhabitants. Because of the position of the levee, the river is invisible to the community. Hidden behind earthen barriers, it is a forgotten place that draws criminal activity and fosters social problems.[581] The area is littered with trash and human waste, and the river, which once brought life to the city, now brings decay.

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lands donated by the Cowell family was slotted to be used for university land. Thus, the University of Santa Cruz is the cause of the boon. See Ibid. 55.

[579] Gary B. Griggs, "Flood Control and Ripartian System Destruction: Lower San Lorenzo River, Santa Cruz County, California," in *California Riparian Systems: Ecology, Conservation, and Productive Management,* ed. Richard E. Warner and Kathleen M. Hendrix (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 142.

[580] Gendron and Domhoff, 48.

[581] "San Lorenzo Urban River Plan,"18. In 1978, Proposition 13 was passed in California, which led to the decrease in funding for schools. Due to the high rate of drop-outs, Frank de Jesús Acosta notes, "By the late 1980s, high rates of crime and violence came to be preferred targets of the draconian policy created by leaders increasingly prone to frame solutions solely in terms of punishment and social control, rather than with an eye to addressing the root causes of public problems." See Frank de Jesús Acosta, *The History of Barrios Unidos: Healing Community Violence* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2007), 45. The Barrios Unidos was a non-profit organization, which originated in Santa Cruz, to help stop community violence.

Making the River Visible

The city of Santa Cruz hired Simpson to help make the river and its health an important focus. "[The river] needed to be healed, and that healing would be the armature for the art. Levy as armature."[582] Simpson's plan includes bulleted instructions that detail the Public Art Making Process, which includes the aforementioned suggestions about how to choose a cooperative design team; Recommended Projects—First Phase and Second Phase, which suggests specific details for projects in order "to establish a philosophical framework"; General Design Considerations that provide guidelines for artists, architects, and designers; and Specific Design Considerations, which gives concrete information about the projects.

Recommended Projects: First Phase

Riverway Scroll

Because the levee is the "single most dominant man-made feature" of the Santa Cruz landscape, Simpson concentrated on it.[583] There is a pathway along the levee that provided opportunities to "rejoin the River with the community."[584] One of Simpson's first additions is a "Riverway Scroll." Placed along the asphalt pathway, are designs of water life, portraits of birds that live in the area, and other images that pertain to water and health (figs. 97 and 98). Simpson suggests other things could be used, including anamorphic lettering—stretched words that would be readable when viewed from a

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[582] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

[583] Buster Simpson, "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," artist statement, November 2002, 7. Found online at http://www.bustersimpson.net/leveeasarmature/LeveeAsArmature.Nov2002.pdf.

[584] Simpson, "Poetic Utility," 6.

particular angle.[585] Additionally, "the suggested medium is an environmentally friendly and durable traffic marking paint, which is water based and already in use by the City of Santa Cruz. The images would last as long as the asphalt lasts, or until patching or replacement of the walkway surface occurs."[586]

By placing images of plant and animal life along the levee, Simpson hopes to raise the viewer's awareness of the living connection between the environment and the river. They might then want to take ownership of the space. By taking individual responsibility, the hope is that users of the path would help keep it clean and free of liter and pollution. Simpson includes five "actions" that could be used to bring his plan into being. These include creating a prototype for the *Riverway Scroll*, hiring a coordinator, sending out a call for artists for designs, developing a proposal, and finally implementing the proposal. Simpson's instructions, despite their detail, are only *suggestions*—any artist choosing the plan could modify the design and materials to best fit their working method.

Watershed and Floodplain Awareness

The *Riverway Scroll* uses illustrations of river wildlife. The *Watershed and Floodplain Awareness* uses visual images that bring attention to the ecological problems of the surrounding area. Such images could be included on hatch covers that link rainwater drains to the San Lorenzo watershed. Visual scales could be painted on landmarks to show the level to which water would rise if a flood occurs. Simpson suggests that this element could be called *Global Gauge* and that it could "provide an ideal location for telling a story concerning the ramifications of global warming on costal

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[585] Simpson includes a historical drawing that illustrates how anamorphic drawings were accomplished. Grids were used to transform the images. See David Topper, "On Anamorphosis: Setting Some Things Straight," *Leonardo* 33 (February 2002): 115-24, for an analysis of the history and making of anamorphic drawings.

[586] Simpson, "Poetic Utility," 7.

communities around the world."[587] Over twenty floods have been recorded in the Santa Cruz area since 1852. The most damaging flood occurred in 1955; the river ran out of its banks and down Santa Cruz's main street at a depth of three to four feet, causing numerous deaths and many millions of dollars worth of damage.[588] Simpson suggests painting markers under bridge supports to show the depth the water reached during different floods (fig. 99). Other educational elements could also be included.

Simpson includes two examples of educational text about the prevention of flooding in his "Master Plan." One reads: "The most common engineering solution for protecting the ocean coast—pumping sand—would allow us to keep our beaches; levees and bulkheads along sheltered waters would gradually eliminate most of the nation's wetland shorelines."[589] The other includes information about global warming and the rise of sea levels.

General Design Considerations

In the section entitled "General Design Considerations," Simpson includes "a set of design guidelines to assist the collaboration among artists, the City Public Works

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[587] Ibid. For information on global warming and rising sea levels, see Lynne T. Edgerton, *The Rising Tide: Global Warming and World Sea Levels* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1991); S. Fred Singer and Dennis T. Avery, *Unstoppable Global Warming* (Landham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007); and Linda R. Berg, *Introductory Botany: Plants, People and the Environment* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole, 2008), 549.

[588] The number of deaths ranges from five to eight, as retold in different sources. See Donna Jones and Don Miller, *Santa Cruz County: A Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of Californa Press; Santa Cruz: Sentinel Publishers, 1999), 38.

[589] Buster Simpson, "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," 10. For more information about the construction and engineering of sand pumping, see C. Quirk, G. Heerten, F. Saathoff, and K. Stelljes, "Artificial Offshore Reef Construction Using Innovative Geotextile Sand Containers," in *Breakwaters, Coastal Structures, and Coastlines: Proceedings*, ed. N. W. H. Allsop (Bodmin, Cornwall: M.P.G. Books, 2002), 359-72. For articles discussing the controversies surrounding pumping sand, see Jeffrey Pompe, "The Nature of Sand: South Carolina's Shifting Shoreline," *South Carolina Policy Forum Magazine* 6 (Summer 1995): 4-12; and Wallace Kaufman and Orrin H. Pilkey, *The Beaches Are Moving: The Drowning of America's Shoreline* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983).

Department, and other departments in creating utilitarian elements and amenities that reinforce the goals of the River Plan and Art Plan."[590] He encourages those who are the designers for the project to implement "Poetic Utility" to enhance the original landscapes or structures so that the utilitarian aspects of the site become more noticeable.[591] For example, Simpson proposes pedestrian and bike bridges across the levees. The bridges would contribute to the community by encouraging more commuting by bicycle and foot.[592] According to Simpson, "the aesthetic should be the objective of the engineer and, in turn, be embellished, not decorated, by the artist."[593] Simpson also makes suggestions about the vegetation and lighting around the bridges, including Redwood groves and solar powered Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs). The latter would be energy efficient and provide safe lighting for night travelers.[594]

Akin to mid-century modernists, Simpson advocates a "less is more" design approach by eliminating unnecessary details and only adding what is essential to the project or artwork.[595] But what make Simpson's designs so different are the educational elements.[596] He incorporates statements about past flooding and information about the fish, birds, and animals that depend upon the river. Unnecessary design details are

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[590] Ibid., 16.

[591] Ibid.

[592] Research has shown that commuting by foot or bike also is beneficial to one's health and to the environment. Frederick R. Steiner, Kent S. Butler, and the American Planning Association, *Planning and Urban Design Standards* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2007), 374.

[593] Buster Simpson, "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," 17.

[594] Ibid.

[595] See Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); and Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: Less is More* (Zurich and New York: Waser, 1986).

[596] For other examples that analyze Simpson's educational public art, see Chapter 3.

excluded; what remains are the core elements that visually point to the importance of the river and its ecosystem.

Continuation of the Work

Simpson includes ways that the community can be directly involved with the upkeep of the river. He mentions organizations in Santa Cruz—the Santa Cruz Bird Club, the Coastal Watershed Council, and the Santa Cruz National History Museum—that champion protecting natural habitats in the area.[597] Simpson also states that his project would attract people of all ages and backgrounds and could "enable an educational journey that can have a profound affect on how the community of Santa Cruz interacts with its natural surroundings."[598]

Although this project has not yet been realized due to lack of funding, the ideas are on the internet to inspire other artists or city officials to implement their own plans in their cities.[599] Simpson accomplished the difficult task of creating and planning the project; all that is left is the execution. Simpson's ideas are currently on the internet for anyone to use, so long as they give credit where credit is due, for free.

Portland South Waterfront Greenway: Conceptual Schematic Design Phase

Simpson created the *Portland South Waterfront Greenway* Master Plan in August, 2004. This plan included computer-designed "sketches" made to revitalize an area of Portland along the Willamette River that was in dire need of attention. Because Portland

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[597] Buster Simpson, "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," 13.

[598] Ibid., 23.

[599] The information about the current state of the city projects of Santa Cruz came from an email from Crystal Birns, the City Arts Program Manager for the City of Santa Cruz on October 20, 2009. She remarked that the city had mixed feelings about Simpson's project.

is an industrial city, its economy depends heavily on the Willamette River. High river traffic, over time, has caused erosion of the shoreline.[600] Simpson's Master Plan includes revitalizing the Waterfront by cleaning the space and adding elements such as plant nurseries, walking paths, and artist studios (fig. 100).

With this particular Master Plan, Simpson created a large-scale model of his own working past. He includes themes such as using recycled materials to create new and inventive art, remodeling space (using the process as product), and recycling rainwater. He claims that an artist can transform a space:

> As a provocateur, trickster, and healer, the artist can stimulate thinking as well as present a visually legible image with a disarming, poignant viewpoint. Artists working in the public must be cognizant of the responsibilities and obligations inherent in shared space.[601]

Proposing this idea publicly in cyberspace, Simpson goads others to think about ways in which they can help clean or support their neighborhoods.

Simpson's Master Plan provides numerous examples of how the South Waterfront can be remediated and rebuilt. Although the twenty-two-page schematic design plan has not yet been realized for the Portland waterfront, because the project he suggests is based on his past works, it clearly can be implemented. Simpson encourages collaborations between artists, historians, writers, designers, engineers, and scientists: "This approach can open up the creative process and broaden the project's scope."[602] Collaborations between artists and other members in the community can, as Simpson's projects have proven, be highly productive.

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600 For more information about the Willamette River, see William D. Honey, *The Willamette River Greenway: Cultural and Environmental Interplay* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1975).

601 Buster Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway: Conceptual Schematic Design Phase," artist statement, August 2004, 2. Found online at http://www.bustersimpson.net/portlandgreenway/portlandgreenway.08.23.04.pdf.

602 Ibid.

The Waterfront Project combines numerous small works that could potentially revitalize the waterfront. Included in the design scheme are plans for artists' studios in abandoned warehouses called Cargo Town, a Scrapyard of Transformative Potential that makes recycled materials free and available to artists, a Greenway Promenade, a Blueberry Bog, and a community garden, as well as ways to recycle grey water.

Cargo Town

Underneath Highway 26 next to the Willamette River are abandoned industrial buildings. Instead of tearing them down, Simpson suggests reusing them. The buildings could be cost-efficiently refitted to create artists' studios, or even low-income housing.[603] In his plan, Simpson refers to three cities that have also incorporated this idea. Boston, New York, and London "have produced high design architectural projects and proved the economic viability this modular approach offers. A proposed Cargo Town adjacent to the Willamette River would continue an international discussion and up the ante by instituting a comprehensive sustainable agenda. Cargo Town is part of a global village discussion, adaptable to changing needs, an incubator for live/work, and a prototype laboratory" (figs. 101 and 102).[604] Because urban space is often coveted, this plan offers an alternative and sustainable approach to housing and artist space. Moreover, the plans are flexible, so that the Cargo Town could be fitted for the demographic that would need it most: artists or low-income residents. This idea not only recycles the space,

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[603] Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 8.

[604] Ibid. In Boston, Fox & Fowle Architects created "Gloucester Green" in 2003. They created a plan that used shipping containers for development. See Kira L. Gould, *Fox & Fowle Architects: Designing for the Built Realm* (Mulgrave, Victoria: Images Publishing, 2005), 81. In New York, architect Adam Kalkin created "Quik Houses" in 2001; Quik houses are made of shipping containers as well, but are designed for private residences. See Will McLean, *Quik Building: Adam Kalkin's ABC of Container Architecture* (London: Bibliotheque McLean, 2008) In London, near the Thames River, Eric Reynolds created "Urban Space" in 2002. See more, David Long, *Spectacular Buildings: London's 100 Most Extraordinary Buildings* (Stroud, Gloucester: History Press, 2006).

but also serves as a model for environmental design. Simpson suggests that the industrial buildings could be fitted with green roofs, passive solar energy, or wind power.[605] With regard to artists' studios, Simpson knows first hand about the importance of having a large space in which to work. He cleaned and restored the abandoned space over the Pollyfriedlander Gallery in Seattle as a conceptual work of art. Reusing old industrial buildings, which provide large amounts of space, can be an answer for artists, Simpson's Master Plan provides the blueprints on how to make this happen.[606]

Scrapyard of Transformative Potential

Another suggestion included in his Master Plan is the "Scrapyard of Transformative Potential." Simpson suggests a site—perhaps the area under the Ross Island Bridge—that could provide a good place to create art, as well as provide of the material used to make it. In his Master Plan, he includes a collage of photographs of the area under the bridge (fig. 103). Old chains, rusty sheet metal, the remains of old boats, and what appears to be large blocks of wood are present. Simpson says that "this material will provide a resource for artists to draw from and recycle into the making of elements and amenities along the South Waterfront Greenway and future commissioned and collaboration projects with private and public development."[607] This space can be "a place where the mind's eye and tinkering intellect can wander and digest the intrinsic transformative potential."[608]

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[605] Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 8.

[606] Simpson's current studio is located in a "recycled" grocery store in Seattle on 901 Yakima Avenue.

[607] Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 10.

[608] Ibid., 10.

Simpson not only suggests action, but also hopes to change minds. He encourages others to see an abandoned space full of "industrial flotsam and jetsam" as a place for creativity, since turning the discarded materials into art is an intellectual challenge.[609] Recalling his days at Pilchuck, when recycling materials was the only means of creating shelter and dry spaces, he says that mindset has never left him. Simpson still uses recycled materials before going to the hardware store for new materials and supplies, and he encourages other artists to do the same.[610]

Art Along the Greenway Promenade

Simpson also proposed that artwork could be placed at the end of the streets leading to the river. At these intersections, the installations will "naturally evolve to become social gathering places."[611] Along the promenade, Simpson proposed creating works of art out of natural materials that could eventually become "offerings to the rising river."[612] Flooding often occurs along the Willamette River.[613] Instead of playgrounds or other works of art that might be destroyed during times of high water, Simpson proposes using natural elements, such as branches and logs, that could be lost without great cost.

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[609] Ibid.

[610] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009. See Chapter 1 for more information about Pilchuck.

[611] Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 13.

[612] Ibid.

[613] Many devastating floods have been recorded throughout the centuries. An exceptionally damaging flood occurred in 1861, which overtook nearly the entire Willamette Valley. See George R. Miller, "The Great Willamette River Flood of 1861," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 100 (Spring 1999): 182-207. More recent destructive flooding occurred in 1964 and 1996. See Brian A. Colle and Clifford F. Mass, "The 5-9 February 1996 Flooding Event over the Pacific Northwest: Sensitivity Studies and Evaluation of the MM5 Precipitation Forecasts," *American Meteorological Society* 128 (March 2000): 593-617.

Harkening back to his Woodstock days, where his creations were re-appropriated for shelter and firewood, Simpson suggests using natural elements from the surrounding environment. One example is a "living willow habitat" (fig. 104). Here, using willow branches to create a teepee-like shape, Simpson creates a work that can be recycled by the river. By using organic materials to create the artwork, if the site should be washed away by the rising river, the willow sculptures would gradually decompose.[614] By incorporating Simpson's "anti-precious" attitude, the designer or implementer of the work can choose the art that *best fits* the space or the community.

Blueberry Bog, Community Garden

Another suggestion is to plant blueberry bushes along the boggy area next to the river. In the Master Plan, Simpson incorporates photographs of a Blueberry Bog in Bellevue, Washington, in order to show the feasibility of planting blueberry bushes in Portland.[615] The blueberry bushes could even be planted in a labyrinth, in order to draw attention to the aesthetic dimensions of the bog. This design could function in two ways: in the summertime, when the blueberries were in season, it would be a social gathering place as well as a healthy food source for the community. In the wintertime, it would serve as a detention pond that would hold run-off from the nearby watershed.[616]

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[614] Other works that Simpson suggests in this section are the "Liberty Hull Colonnade," which would create art modeled after the shape of a boat hull, "Industrial Infrastructure Retrofit," which would reuse or recycle the industrial structures down by the waterfront, "Power Tower Vector," which would turn an old power tower into a "duck blind," and a "Hydro Tower," which would transform an antiquated water tank into a fountain. For more information on these projects, see Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 16-7.

[615] There are numerous blueberry farms in Western Washington that are called "U-pick" farms. These places offer baskets for consumers to come and pick the berries themselves at a discounted price. The farms advertise to families as a fun and community-oriented activity.

[616] Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 17.

The boggy area along the river could also provide space for a "Civic Nursery," as Simpson calls such "temporary landscapes."[617] Instead of leaving an abandoned plot of land empty, he suggests planting vegetation for both aesthetic and practical purposes. To this end, Simpson includes images of community heritage orchards, seed banks, and fields of tulips: "Nurturing unique and heritage specimens, as well as rescued plants and trees from nearby construction sites would make this nursery an educational asset."[618]

If Blueberry Bogs and Civic Nurseries are not practical options, Simpson suggests planning community gardens. In his words, such areas "provide an important catalyst for social engagement."[619] As shown in his P-Patch Garden, discussed in Chapter 4, they can not only provide nourishment for the community, but also encourage an appreciation for the environment. Simpson differs from landscape architects because he does not focus wholly on aesthetics. Rather, he uses trees and plants that provide food for the community. He adds a garden—not a park.

Roof Watershed and Gray Water: A Dependable Irrigation Source

Similar to Simpson's past projects that merge vegetation with sculpture, this Master Plan also includes examples and instructions for how to harness rain water in order to keep the green growth alive.[620] Simpson proposes using runoff:

> There are many tall buildings which could provide a significant head of water pressure to be expressed at grade along the greenway, and throughout the project sites, which could provide a

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617 Ibid., 18.

618 Ibid.

619 Ibid., 17.

620 Portland, Oregon receives on average about 40-60 inches of rainfall per year. This information came from the Spatial Climate Analysis Service at Oregon State University. See http://www.wrh.noaa.gov.

> dramatic ecological and civic fountain feature, innovative vertical detention systems and vertical landscapes could express a transparent urban water journey. By introducing street runoff runnels and "bio-gutters," storm water runoff enabling bio-mitigation of hydrocarbons and acid rain to be a visible process before reaches the river (fig. 105).[621]

One idea is to recycle gray water during the dry summer and fall months. By engineering pipes to carry water off roofs, natural irrigation can be provided for the Blueberry Bog and the community garden. Also, excess water from water fountains could be pumped to water the blueberry bushes. Simpson suggests gathering a list of artists who might be interested in creating works to recycle rainwater.

He includes three photographs from his *Growing Vine Street* project. These are the Green Roof and Garden with Bow Truss Downspout, his Beckoning Cistern, and his Vertical Landscape Planters.[622] He also includes an image of *Host Analog'*s drinking fountain, which uses grey water to irrigate the growth upon the fallen tree (fig. 106).[623] Since *Host Analog* is also in Portland, people can see one of Simpson's projects at work.

Adding these images to his Master Plan proves not only that these ideas are feasible, but also that they can be successfully accomplished. Simpson ends his Master Plan with these suggestions:

> In order to instill community ownership and stewardship, it is important to provide residents involvement opportunities during the evolution of the site design and making. Leaving aspects of the project to be completed or planted by future residents and tenants is a good start . . . . If the community, which includes planners and artists, engages in some of the planting, issues of a successful habitat and respect for particular landscape concepts their support will override negative perceptions of habitat blocking river views, risk management, and maintenance issues. This approach allows the design landscape attitude to be less by the book and instead more innovative.[624]

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621 Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 20.

622 See Chapter 4 for more information.

623 See Chapter 3.

624 Simpson, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 22.

Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan

Simpson's most recent Master Plan includes the Southeast False Creek in Vancouver, British Columbia, created in 2007. Southeast False Creek is a neighborhood that consists of eighty acres of former industrial land and is located on the waterfront. Vancouver, due to its strategic location, centered near the Fraser River and close to three major bodies of water, has attracted Native Americans as a meeting place for millennia.[625] The first native settlers, called the Four Host First Nations (or *S'ólh Téméxw*), came to the area between 8,000 and 6,000 BCE. Europeans did not arrive until the late-eighteenth century: Spanish Captain José María Narváez explored the area in 1791, and British Captain George Vancouver arrived in 1792.[626] Eighty years later, European settlement followed.[627] Since the mid-1800s, the waterfront has been the site of saw mills, salt distribution centers, and shipbuilding, metalworking, and warehousing establishments.[628]

But since 1991, Vancouver has attempted to revitalize the region and "develop a neighbourhood that is the model of sustainability, incorporating: forward-thinking infrastructure; strategic energy reduction; high-performance buildings; and high transit access."[629] Simpson chose to focus on this specific neighborhood because it was

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[625] Keith Thor Carlson, *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2001): 12-16.

[626] See John E. Roberts, *A Discovery Journal: George Vancouver's First Survey Season* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005) for more information about Vancouver's namesake.

[627] Carlson, 12.

[628] Christopher A. De Sousa, *Brownfields Redevelopment and the Quest for Sustainability* (Amsterdam and Boston: Elsevier, 2008), 144.

[629] Ibid. See also the City of Vancouver's website that promotes this philosophy: http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/southeast/index.htm. Since World War II, Canadian cities have become denser and more compact when compared to U. S. cities. This is because of the interstate development push in the U. S. after the war. Because of the denseness of Canadian cities, especially Vancouver, there is now a push to make these crowded cities more sustainable. See

highlighted in February 2010 as the home of the Winter Olympics. Because the world watched Vancouver for two weeks, the City wanted to create an aesthetically pleasing and sustainable place to promote its images.

What can art do to create a sustainable neighborhood? How can art or artists make a difference in urban life? Simpson answers these questions in the first part of his Master Plan:

> Artists are powerful thinkers and provocateurs. Artwork interwoven into the public realm often serves as a social catalyst or as a way to reveal complex ideas and issues in engaging ways. At Southeast False Creek it is critically important to set a framework for community engagement—to stimulate understanding that will lead to a greater sense of shared responsibility and caring. That is the kind of art experience envisioned in this plan.[630]

His Master Plan for Vancouver is specifically for Vancouver, but broad enough to be incorporated into many North American cities.

Simpson breaks down his "Themes for Sustainable Places." into five sections: *Park Integration, Water Experience, Chronicle History, Distinctive Urban Form,* and *Water, Energy and Agriculture.* Each of these themes brings a new way of making the neighborhood more community-centered and environmentally friendly.

Park Integration

Similar to the Portland Waterway, the Southeast False Creek neighborhood is bordered by a river. To enliven the space, Simpson suggests adding vegetation and artwork along the waterfront. The idea of *Park Integration* consists of "a network of green spaces that include significant artwork as part of the waterfront park."[631] Civic

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Fritz W. Wagner, *Revitalizing the City: Strategies to Contain Sprawl and Revive the Core* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 99-100.

[630] Buster Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan: City of Vancouver, BC," artist statement, March 2007, 4.

[631] Ibid., 8.

Nurseries reappear in this Master Plan. In contrast to the actions of most landscape architects, who often research and design a space according to their own intentions, Simpson favors the idea of allowing the *residents* to select and plant their own vegetation instead of having the city create "instant" or "pre-designed" parks. Simpson argues that learning about plant life is good for both children and adults: "Planting trees is a powerful symbol often used to make anniversaries or milestones in the life of an individual or community."[632] In his *First Avenue Streetscape Project* in Seattle, Simpson took the planting of trees in an urban landscape into his own hands. Now, trees native to western Washington—not trees that are purely ornamental—line the street.[633]

Water Experience

Along with vegetation, water has taken a prominent position in many of Simpson's past works. Due to Vancouver's proximity to the ocean, water plays an important role in its economy.[634] Thus, in the Southeast False Creek plan, the importance of water is highlighted. The watershed is "poetically revealed," because, as Simpson believes, "engagement is the key to understanding the story of water."[635]

Simpson suggests that the neighborhood use gray water whenever possible by using runnels, detention cisterns, and irrigated landscapes. He wants the path of these water systems to be visible to the public.[636] Simpson includes pictures of his own earlier projects: *Beckoning Cistern, Water Table/Water Glass,* and part of *Growing Vine*

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[632] Ibid., 25.

[633] See Chapter 4 for an analysis on Simpson's *First Avenue Streetscape Project.*

[634] The fishing and logging industries are just two of many large industries that use the tributaries and the ocean. See Alex Wellington, Allan Jacob Greenbaum, and Wesley Cragg, *Canadian Issues in Environmental Ethics* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1997), 13.

[635] Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 8.

[636] Ibid., 13.

Street.[637] He also includes other images of water, such as a fountain at the California Science Center in Los Angeles, which is hand-activated (fig. 107).

Another image included in Simpson's Master Plan is the Suckahanna Rain Garden designed by Jann Rosen-Queralt in Arlington, Virginia (fig. 108). This park includes a place for skateboarding, soccer fields, and an interactive nature area. In the nature area, a rain garden is present, which educates viewers about how rainwater is collected and filtered through layers of sand and clay underground.[638] Always giving credit where credit is due, Simpson incorporates other people's ideas in his Master Plans.

Chronicle History

Art used to chronicle history can both point back to a city's past and also point towards its future. In this vein, Simpson suggests inviting Native American artists who are local to the region—the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseli-Waututh peoples (known as the Four Host First Nations)—to create work that chronicles their history along the waterfront.[639] The Four Host First Nations have been heavily involved with both bringing the Olympic and Paralympic Games to Vancouver, as well as helping to support the Games. The Four Host First Nations Society's mission "is to represent the Nations and to facilitate engagement between the Nations and the Vancouver Organizing

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[637] For more information about these projects, see Chapter 4. Simpson's *Water Table/Water Glass* (2001) is another sculpture that incorporates water. It is located outside of the Ellington Condominiums in Seattle. The work consists of a large "glass" which is created to be a large rain cistern. It captures the rain runoff from the roof. The runoff flows down a tube, which is fashioned to look like a large straw. The water flows out of the top of the glass to the grasses that are planted around the glass.

[638] Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 40. See also Mary Jane Solomon, "Rain, Rain, Don't Go Away," *Washington Post,* April 15, 2005, WE51, for an analysis of the work.

[639] Ibid., 11. For an artistic book visually describing the oral traditions of the Four Host First Nations, see *People of the Land: Legends of the Four Host First Nations* (Oroville, WA: Theytus Books, 2009).

Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in order to ensure that the Games are successful and that the Nations' languages, traditions, protocols and cultures are meaningfully acknowledged, respected, and represented in the planning, staging and hosting of the Games."[640] With the Olympics as a backdrop, Simpson wanted his work to reflect aboriginal games, such as the "strength testing stone" game historically played by Native people of the region.[641] Symbolizing strength and endurance, the game is a perfect metaphor for both the Olympic Games and for saving a neighborhood in need of rehabilitation.

Distinctive Urban Form

Simpson also suggests that the city make better use of its new Community Center, which was built as the office space for the Olympic and Paralympic mayor and management staff (fig. 109). The building was designed by Nick Milkovich Architects Inc., a locally based architecture firm.[642] Simpson wants this $36 million dollar building to be used as more than just a meeting space for officials. Because, as he notes, the building is "literally the center of community," it could be used for temporary art shows and performances, and enhance an "on-going mindfulness through art."[643] This

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[640] For information about the Four Host First Nations, see their website: http://www.fourhostfirstnations.com/about-us. Due to the recentness of the Olympics, a statement by the Four Host First Nations has not yet been published in print.

[641] For more information about Native American games, see Steward Culin, *Games of Change: Games of the North American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

[642] Nick Milkovich Architects, Inc. has received numerous awards, including the Premier Award of Excellence in Architecture in 2007. For an article discussing Milkovich's work in Vancouver, see Bo Helliwell, "View from Vancouver," *Architectural Review* 210 (December 2001): 35. For information about the analysis of the Community Center project, see: http://vancouver.ca/Parks/info/2010olympics/sefc.htm. After the games are over, the Community Center will be used to house the Four Host First Nations.

[643] Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 17.

"mindfulness" refers back to his manifesto—he wants to keep the betterment of the community at the forefront of people's thinking.

Simpson also suggests that the community center should be a model building for sustainability.[644] According to him, "the idea of energy, related to consumption as well as the harnessed power of the neighborhood through its members, is a resonant theme for artists to explore."[645]

> How many people live in [South East False Creek]? How many children? What will the world look like when they reach maturity? How much energy is generated? Saved? Lost? How does an artist reveal community in a way that helps foster a sense of connection and shared commitment to the sustainability goals? The 'village' is built, and the homes and public spaces populated, but the success of the [South East False Creek] experiment in sustainable urban living must involve a renewed commitment through daily practice on the part of its residents. The Community Center is a place to express that on-going mindfulness through art.[646]

Simpson is not encouraging something new to be built—instead, he wants the city to use a flashy new building as a community hub. Because strong architecture is shown to increase community ties and even decrease the amount of crime in a neighborhood, Simpson recognizes its value.[647] If a building paves the way for environmental standards, perhaps the people will take notice and incorporate such standards into their

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644 According to recent statistics, large buildings use one-third of energy consumed in the United States, and two-thirds of all electricity used. Lighting, heating, cooling, and ventilation in a large sized space are the culprits of this use. See Michelle Addington, "Energy, Body, Building: Rethinking Sustainable Design," in *Nature, Landscape, and Building for Sustainability,* ed. William S. Saunders (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 158-9.

645 Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 17.

646 Ibid.

647 A myriad of books linking architecture and community development have been written. For an article detailing the link between architecture and decreased crime, see Neal Kumar Katyal, "Architecture as Crime Control," *Yale Law Journal* 111 (March 2002): 1039-139. For information about architecture's link to a sustainable community, see Cynthia Girling and Ronald Kellett, *Skinny Streets and Green Neighborhoods: Design for Environment and Community* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005).

own lives. Also, if this building—which gleams of shiny glass and metal—is seen as the hub of the neighborhood, adding art exhibitions, classes, and performances could draw people to the building. Thus, "Distinct Urban Form" does not have to be a sculpture set in a city park; it can be a building that becomes a symbol for sustainable practices.

Water, Energy and Agriculture

As Simpson suggests, "the importance of water in the urban ecosystem from the naturalized water's edge to storm water management systems . . . is poetically revealed through interactive artworks; engagement is the key to understanding the story of water."[648]Along with planning for art commissions that incorporate wind-power and bio-mass fuels, Simpson suggests that the historic "Sawtooth" Building in the Southeast False Creek neighborhood might be a place to house "new energy based technology, creating sustainable power for the community."[649]

The main structure in this industrial neighborhood is the Central Machine Shop, built in 1924. Its nickname, the "Sawtooth," came from the jagged shape of its roof. It is on the list of historic places for "being a good example of pragmatic, industrial architecture."[650] Moreover, the Sawtooth Building was planned by the city engineer in order to create "more direct and centralized management which always results in greater efficiency and economy."[651] Simpson reveals the symbolism of the historic building by planning to install solar panels on its famous roofline. In his Master Plan, he includes

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[648] Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 8.

[649] Ibid., 15.

[650] For information on this historic building, see Vancouver's official list of historic buildings: http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/southeast/documents/pdf/centralmachine_sos.pdf.

[651] Charles Brackenridge was the City Engineer of Vancouver from 1924 to 1949. Information from *City of Vancouver Archives, Engineering Services Fond, Office of the City Engineer, City Engineer's Reports*, *1906-1959* (Series 372), "Re-organization of the Works Department' in Report of the City Engineer to the Board of Works," May 15, 1924, 8.

images of his Viewland/Hoffman substation, and his *Shared Clotheslines.* Both use wind power to make statements about saving energy.

The third image on the page includes Jill Anholt and Susan Ockwell's sidewalk art entitled, *Uncoverings,* 1998 (fig. 110). These artists made hatchcovers that are simultaneously aesthetically pleasing and functional.[652] The covers are made from glass and steel and allow steam to escape from under the streets. Because they are backlit, they also allow light to pass through the cloudy glass. As Simpson surmises, "the combination of light and steam brings attention to the city's subterranean mysteries."[653] Similar to Simpson's past works, making the invisible visible is appropriate for teaching the neighborhood about the interworkings of city engineering. Simpson suggests that "engagement is key in understanding the story," thus making it easier to remember to conserve.

Conclusion

Simpson attempts to revitalize urban spaces one neighborhood at a time, and his goals are feasible. Although his Master Plans are designed for Santa Cruz, Portland, and Vancouver, he hopes that his ideas will spread beyond these particular communities to other cities. By making his work accessible on the internet, he wants his projects to provide direction for *anyone,* not just artists. Seen retrospectively, these plans are the culmination of Simpson's entire career. His Master Plans take into account all the overarching themes that inform his work. With regards to his Southeast False Creek Project, Simpson said:

> The stakes are high, but so are the possible rewards. Artists working here should dig deep and produce works as if the world

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[652] Karen Henry, "Jill Anholt, Susan Ockwell, *Uncoverings*," *Panorama* 9 (Spring 1999): 2.

[653] Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 40.

> depended on it. Inspire, Delight. Reveal. Bring passion and humor and intelligence and intuitive understanding to your work here. As Mahatma Gandhi famously said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." That is the promise and potential of Southeast False Creek.[654]

I would claim that the "promise and potential" of all of Simpson's Master Plans are great. His utopian vision—revitalizing a community, teaching the inhabitants to care for the land themselves, and bringing in examples of how individuals can make a difference one person at a time—makes passion, humor, intelligence, and intuitive understanding apparent. Through images, words, and plans, Simpson shows people how to plan for a better future.

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654 Ibid., 5.

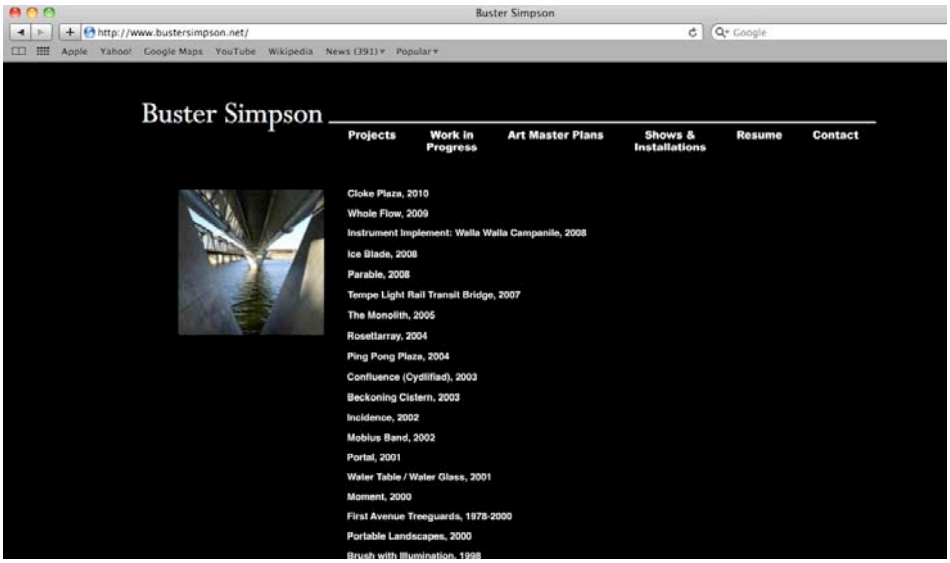

Figure 91: Buster Simpson's website.

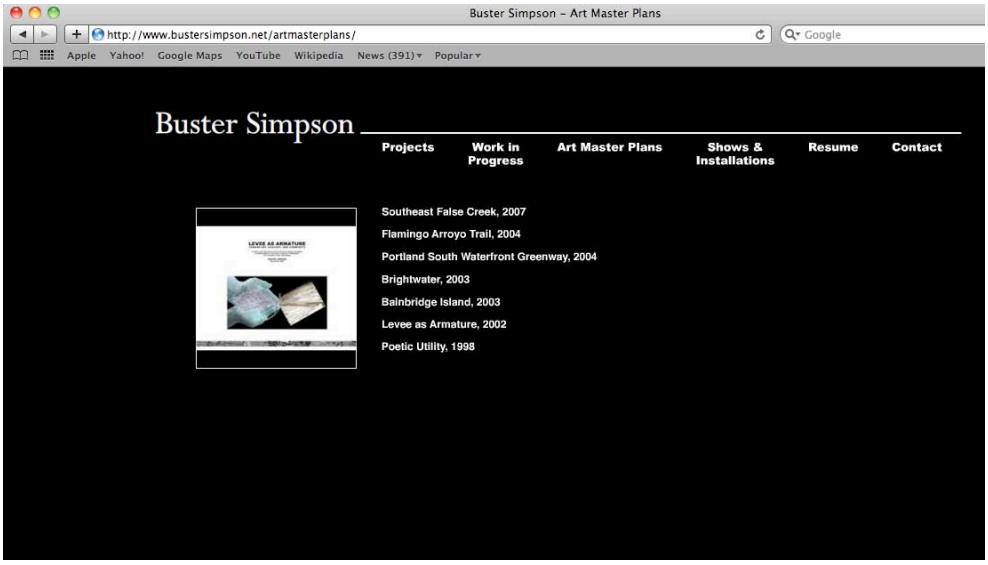

Figure 92: Buster Simpson's website.

Figure 93: Frederick Law Olmstead, *Drawings of Central Park.*

Figure 94: Vladimir Tatlin, Model for Monument to the Third International (1919-20).

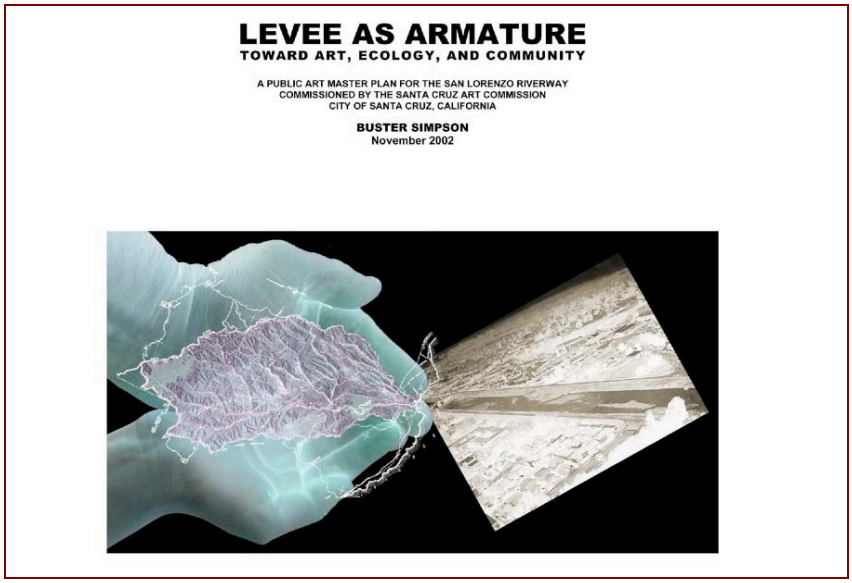

Figure 95: Buster Simpson, "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," Front cover of his Master Plan in a PDF Format, November 2002.

Figure 96: Buster Simpson images, "Pre-levee conditions, c. 1950s; Post-levee conditions, c. 1960s; Habitat within the levee, c. 1990s," in "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," 4.

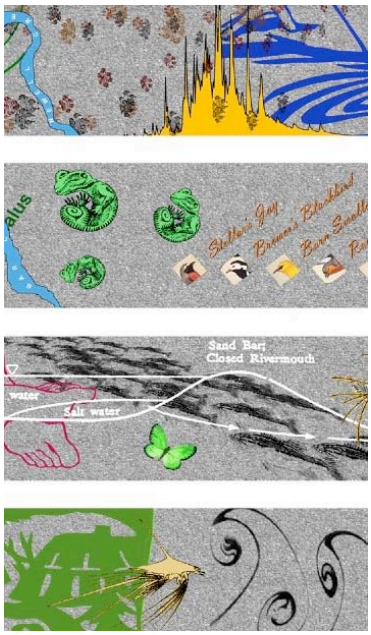

Figure 97: Buster Simpson, "Riverway Scroll," in "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," 7.

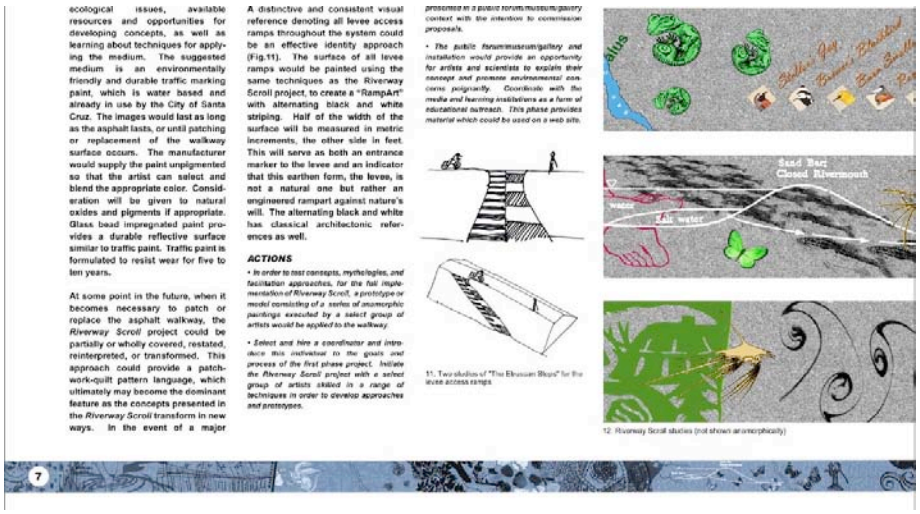

Figure 98: Buster Simpson, Example of page, in "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," 7.

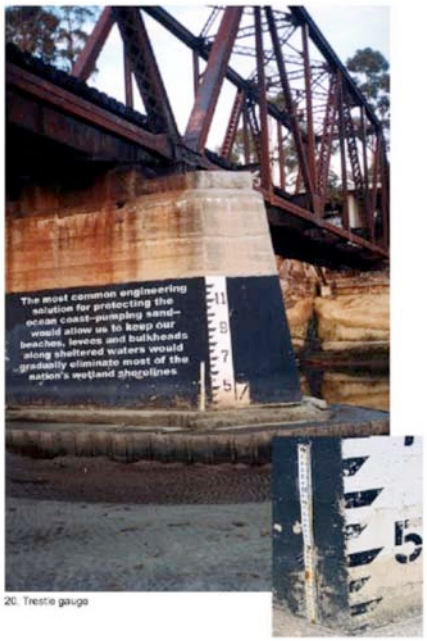

Figure 99: Buster Simpson, "Global Gauge," in "Levee as Armature: Toward Art, Ecology and Community," 10.

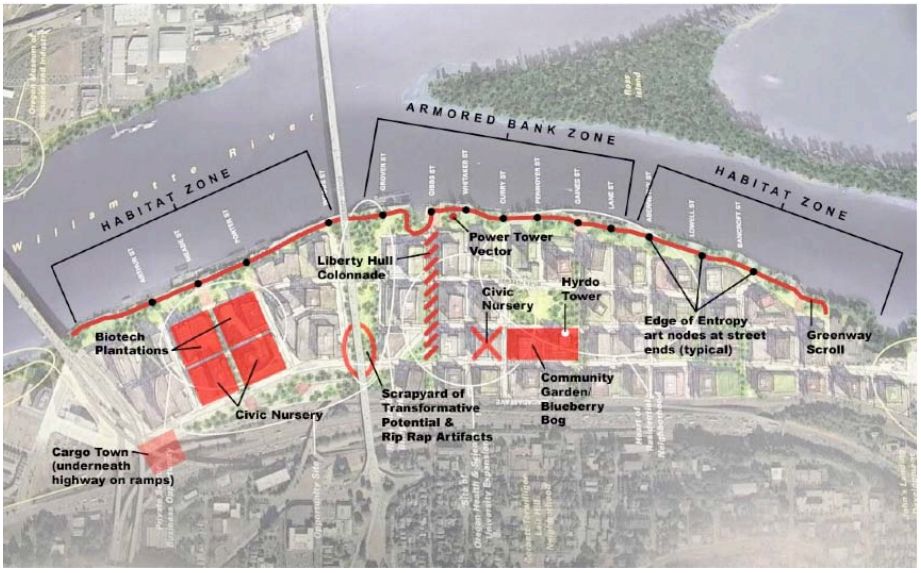

Figure 100: Buster Simpson, Overview of the *Portland South Waterfront Greenway,* in "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 3.

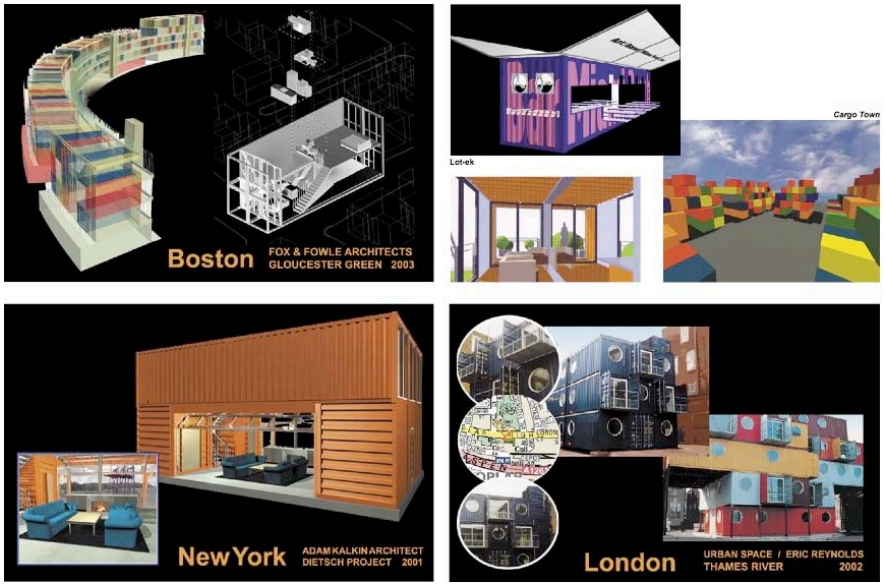

Figure 101: Buster Simpson, Examples of other artists who use cargo containers for shelter, in "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 9.

Figure 102: Buster Simpson, "Cargo Town," in "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 3.

Figure 103: Buster Simpson, “Scrapyard of Transformative Potential,” in “Portland South Waterfront Greenway,” 10.

Figure 104: Buster Simpson, “Living Willow Habitat,” in “Portland South Waterfront Greenway,” 14.

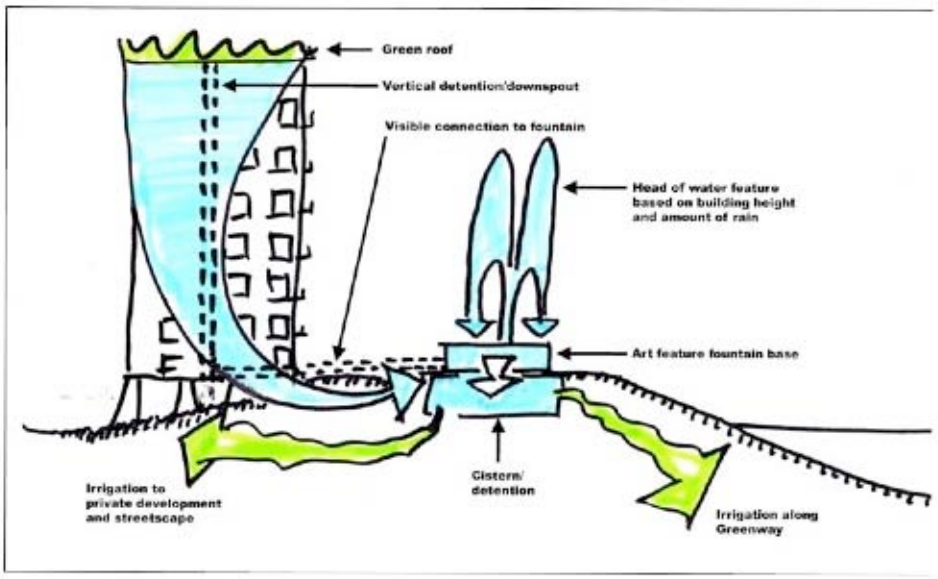

Figure 105: Buster Simpson, sketch for recycling rainwater, in "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 19.

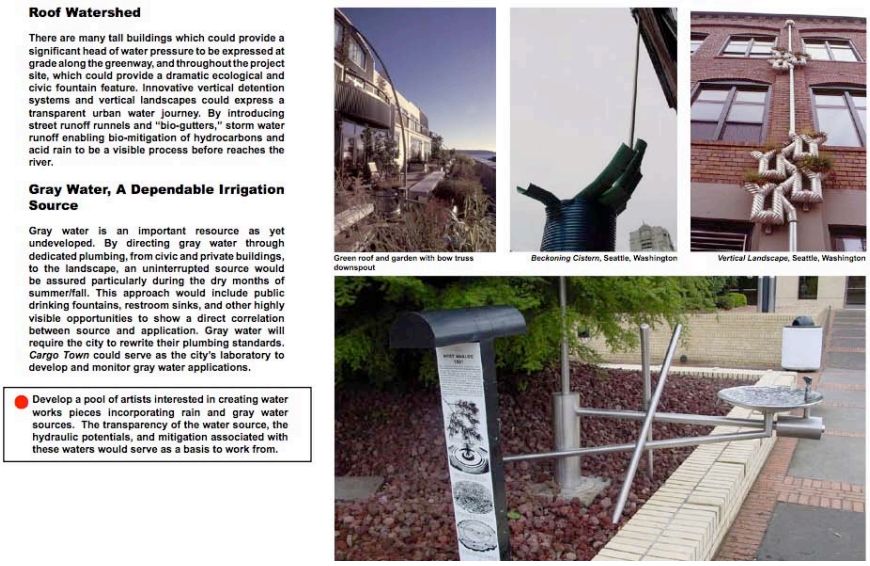

Figure 106: Buster Simpson, examples of past projects, "Portland South Waterfront Greenway," 20.

Figure 107: California Science Center in Los Angeles fountain, Buster Simpson's photograph, in "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 13.

Figure 108: Jann Rosen-Queralt, "Suckahanna Rain Garden," (2001-2004), Buster Simpson's photograph, in "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 14.

Figure 109: Nick Milkovich Architects, Inc., Southeast False Creek Community Center in progress, Vancouver Park Board official website: http://vancouver.ca/Parks/info/2010olympics/sefc.htm.

Figure 110: Jill Anholt and Susan Ockwell, *Uncoverings,* (1998), Buster Simpson's photograph, in "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan," 15.

CONCLUSION

"Going green" has been Simpson's personal and professional motto for the past forty years. The phrase has become a mainstream mantra with the help of high oil prices, Al Gore's Nobel Peace Prize, and the vocal concern about climate change expressed by the scientific community and the Obama administration. Simpson's work takes both tangible and conceptual forms that promote awareness about caring for this planet. But Simpson's work does more than promote environmentalism. His sculptures provide people with answers about how to care for their communities. Some of Simpson's works are simple, others are more complex, but all comprise visual components that promote education about and action toward the ecological well-being of the world.

Simpson's work is both provocative and innovative. He wants to change communities. An interviewer asked Simpson in 2002, "Do you see your work as a step in bringing about change? Is the end result helping people change their ways?" Simpson responded:

> I think there are steps, but it's more like a social armature maker, maybe. You come in, you build a catalyst, you effect the chemical reaction without changing it. As designers our task is to create systems, which are flexible, adaptable, and sustainable. It doesn't hurt if there is a healthy bit of poetry involved, hopefully not letting ego date your concept. Site conditions, social and political realities, history, existing phenomena, and ecology are the armature. The challenge is to navigate along the edge between provocateur and pedestrian, art as gift and poetic utility.[655]

His "poetic utility" balances education with environmental activism, objects with space, and artists with communities. Never losing sight of what is truly important, Simpson focuses on the local environment, while thinking about global issues.

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[655]Bray Hayden and Justin Lowe, "Provocateur: A Conversation with Buster Simpson," *Column 5: Journal of Architecture* 16 (2002): 7.

Simpson received the 2009 Public Art Award for his "unique personal voice and style." His art sets him apart for specific reasons. He collaborates with others during the planning and creation of his work. His public art is designed to be either ephemeral or to change over time. And his installations contain educational elements. They allow viewers, who might otherwise be intimidated by "high" art in public places to get the message. Simpson teaches his viewers, not only about *art,* but also about the environment.

Collaboration

Collaboration has been central to Simpson's art from the beginning. He was part of the first "design team," and this experience has informed his entire career. Successful collaboration also depends on the input of the public, and for Simpson, this input is crucial. Hilde Hein observed that "all art is to some degree public, [but] public art merits its name in virtue of the fact that the creation of a public is its point of departure. Public art presupposes the public sphere and produces a public in relation to that concept."[656] Working in this "public sphere" is Simpson's greatest strength. His focus is not on the pure form or aesthetics of the work, but instead on the message the work conveys.

Learning to collaborate with others was important to Simpson. It allowed him to create work that appealed to a wide audience. Grant Kester believes that:

> the signifying authority of community artists derives from two sources. First it derives from the collaborative process itself. This is an exchange in which the artist, by surrendering some degree of his or her creative autonomy in negotiations with a given group over the production of a project, is granted the authority to speak on its behalf. The second source of authority is a moment of transference that establishes a moral equivalence between his or her experience and that of the community.[657]

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656 Hilde Hein, *Public Art: Thinking Museums Differently* (Landham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 49.

657 Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 149.

He explains that the public artist assumes "authority" to speak for a large group of people. As compared to the artist who creates work that speaks only for him- or herself, the public artist carries the responsibility to uphold a "moral equivalence" with the community. By collaborating with others, the public artist does not diminish the final product, but instead heightens it to a new level.

Collaboration can also reveal things to the artist that working alone cannot, as Kester also explains: "Projects created in collaboration with politically coherent communities tend to be characterized by a more reciprocal process of dialogue and mutual education, with the artist learning from the community and having his or her preconceptions (about the community or specific social, cultural, and political issues) challenged and transformed in turn."[658] Collaboration thus strengthens the work, benefits the community, and helps the artist.

Work that Works: A Focus on the Message

Another aspect of Simpson's successful "voice and style" is seen through the message his works convey. His projects are "temporary prototypes" that can be described as "work that works in the public realm."[659] To make art "work," Simpson focuses on creating a visual message. He does not aim to place an aesthetic object in the public domain. Instead, he creates work that connects with the people and the place. By making the work work, Simpson's public art is well received by the commissioning bodies and the communities who live with it. Simpson's art can be compared with other notable public works that place the focus on the object—Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, for instance.

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[658] Ibid., 151.

[659] Sue Spaid, *Ecoventions: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002), 89.

The differences between Simpson and Serra lie in the purposes behind their creations.[660] Douglas Crimp, an art critic and defender of Serra's sculpture, said:

> I wouldn't want to be patronizing or elitist, but I do think that people could be made to understand that *Tilted Arc* wasn't just some kind of joke at their expense, that Serra is an incredibly serious artist of international renown, that his public works are in cities all across the world, and that most people find them extraordinarily beautiful. It's a different kind of aesthetic, but there are people who respond to this aesthetic—something as simple as that. This is not to say that the whole history of site-specificity or Contextualism or Minimalism could be made comprehensible to people who hadn't followed the developments of contemporary art.[661]

Perhaps if those who passed by Serra's *Tilted Arc* had known more about how minimalist forms are stripped down to their aesthetic fundamentals, or that Serra's large-scale works were inspired by his childhood awe toward enormous ships, they would have appreciated its aesthetic more.[662] But, the work was removed because the public did not fully understand it. Perhaps if educational elements had been available, the work would still be standing; but then again, maybe not. The public's dislike seemed to hinge on the work's imposing nature—its "Iron Curtain" divide down the middle of the plaza—along with its silence about where it stood in relation to the public who lived with it.

Simpson's work is created in a way that is completely different from Serra's. Simpson often discusses his plans with the community, or collaborates with a design team. This method allows for the public's opinion to enter into the discussion from the very beginning. Instead of creating "silent" work that stands alone in a public square,

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660 For books analyzing Postmodern Art, see Irving Sandler, *Art of the Postmodern Era: From the Late 1960s to the Early 1990s* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) and Simon Malpas, *The Postmodern: The New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

661 Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 88-9.

662 For more information on Minimalist Art, see James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). Serra's background information came from a Public Broadcasting Services interview for the documentary entitled *Art: 21,* in 2001.

Simpson adds information that reveals the reasoning behind the art. Finally, instead of creating stand-alone sculpture, Simpson fashions work that interacts with its environment. By doing so, he unites the community instead of dividing it.

Simpson's Anti-Precious Attitude toward Art

Simpson's art is durable. It is placed in the community, outside of museum walls. When there are no museum officials to care for or to conserve them, public art works can fall into disrepair. Simpson's installations negate this issue due to the essence of the materials (or non-materials) he uses his and ephemeral intentions.

From the beginning, the essence of his work has been process, not product. His art cannot be destroyed since it develops and changes over time. Simpson's *Hudson River Purge,* for example, was more process than product. The limestone tablets were meant to dissolve in the river.

Maintaining Simpson's work is often unnecessary. His *First Avenue Streetscape Project,* for example, is made from reused stones. Because Simpson did not carve the stones—they were taken straight from the quarry and placed along the street—they had a non-precious quality about them. A pair of lover's initials carved into one of the old quarry stones does not change the aesthetics of the work nearly as much as a spray-painted "tag" would on Serra's *Tilted Arc.*

Simpson's *Host Analog* is also comprised of non-precious materials. A decaying log that sprouts new growth requires very different care than typical works of art. Instead of guarding the work from the natural elements, Simpson's work actually depends on them to help decompose the tree and to support new growth. The sculpture is not exactly a garden—no one tends to the growth or decay of the plants. Instead, it is allowed to change over time without human intervention. The changes in the work—new seedlings appear, while older growth dies—are vital to Simpson's intention.

Simpson's *Growing Vine Street* also has live elements woven throughout its urban fabric. The installation captures rainwater to keep vegetation alive. Again, because of its public location, no institution or official is responsible for caring for the work. Thus, the responsibility falls on the neighborhood. More than *Host Analog, Growing Vine Street* does have qualities of a garden; it needs to be tended. This aspect of the work helps to unite neighbors and community members in a common cause. By default, people can gather together and connect while weeding the garden that runs along their street. Having the neighborhood assume responsibility for the space can produce a positive outcome. Like human relationships, Simpson's work needs nurturing. It is not a sculpture plopped down in a city square. Instead, it can change in order to prove a point, and grow with a neighborhood and the people who live there in order to enhance a way of life.

Environmental Education: Fitting into the Eco-Art Movement

Although Simpson's work is placed in the public sphere to be viewed by children and adults, he does not eschew challenging subject matter. Simpson's work is complex, so he incorporates text or educational elements to help guide viewers. He is able to teach them about his work, and about the surrounding environment (the message of much of his work). In a city, where concrete and metal are ubiquitous, "urban environmentalism" seems like an oxymoron. Simpson, however, promotes engaging the contradiction:

> I became an urbanist. I love nature, but I love the extremes . . . . I like the wilderness and the density of the urban. I guess my perversion has been over time to combine those two somehow: to keep the intensity of the urban, but green it up some.[663]

Simpson's work has the ability to make the invisible processes of nature visible to viewers. In urban spaces, where parks and lawns are manicured, there often tends to be a

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[663] Personal interview with Buster Simpson, June 26, 2009.

disconnect between the natural environment and the environment that is contrived to seem natural. Simpson attempts to reconnect these domains by drawing attention to nature's processes.

In *Growing Vine Street* and *King Street Gardens,* Simpson highlights the water cycle. Instead of hiding the path the water takes, like sewer systems often do, Simpson's installations reveal the water's path. His installations point to the interconnectedness of urban water systems. If tainted materials enter the sewer systems, they pollute the connecting streams. Both works inform viewers about their surrounding environment in hopes that they will understand the importance of taking care of their living space.

Linda Weintraub notes the contribution to the art world of artists like Simpson:

> [Eco-Artists] celebrate human aspiration without glorifying individual personality. On the creation side of the art-making process, they collaborate with politicians, citizens, scientists, children, educators, and business leaders. Most open the borders of their art practice beyond the human community, to embrace reefs, waste dumps, the entire length of the Mississippi River, national television, and aquifers. Practical outcomes dominate self-revelation. Ethical responsibility replaces self-expression. Cooperation takes the place of self-assertion. In all these ways, the artists optimize the behavior-shaping impact of their artworks.[664]

Simpson's personal philosophy, work ethic, and creations reflect this approach. His works are not created for self-glorification, but for the greater good.

The collaboration and cooperation between artists and communities are essential for successful Eco-Art. One solitary person cannot clean, fix, or restore a damaged environment. Many people, however, can help change attitudes and prevent further harm from occurring. Although he is grouped with notable Eco-Artists such as Helen and Newton Harrison, Alan Sonfist, Susan Leibowitz Stienman, Merle Laderman Ukeles, Mel

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664 Linda Weintraub, "Final Thoughts: Eco-Art in Practice," *Art Journal* 65 (Spring 2006): 81.

Chin, Viet Ngo, Patricia Johanson, and Agnes Denes, Simpson's work stands on its own. As Robert L. Lynch, chief executive of Americans for the Arts, put the matter:

> Buster Simpson has helped define contemporary and environmental public art. He is an accomplished artist and an exemplary leader in community arts. His innovation and dedication has been recognized regionally and nationally in the public art field.[665]

Simpson's emphasis is on environmental awareness. His goals continue to be altruistic and global. As he aptly states, "mitigating the history of negligence and creating a holistic future are the challenges."[666]

By creating environmental work in public places, Simpson hopes to goad neighbors into caring for their neighborhoods. Although this challenge is daunting, he recognizes that the potential positive outcomes are greater than the hurdles. He begins one of his Master Plans with an appropriate quote from Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple:

> There's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes . . . the ones who see things differently . . . You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things. . . . they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.[667]

May Simpson's work inspire a generation of artists, community members, and newfound environmentalists to open their eyes to the world around them, and to change it for the better.

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[665] Spoken at the Americans for the Arts Conference, held in Seattle in June of 2009. This quote was reprinted in the press release, compiled by Liz Bartolomeo for Americans for the Arts on June 18, 2009.

[666] Spaid, 89.

[667] Buster Simpson, "Southeast False Creek Art Master Plan: City of Vancouver, BC," Artist Statement, March 2007, 3.

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