EVICTIONS
ART AND SPATIAL POLITICS

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No return to the past is conceivable within the framework of democracy.

—Claude Lefort, "Human Rights and the Welfare State"

What does it mean for space to be "public"—the space of a city, building, exhibition, institution, or work of art? Over the last decade, this question has provoked vigorous debates among art, architecture, and urban critics. Important issues are at stake in these debates. How we define public space is intimately connected with ideas about what it means to be human, the nature of society, and the kind of political community we want. While there are sharp divisions over these ideas, on one point nearly everyone agrees: supporting things that are public promotes the survival and extension of democratic culture. Judging, then, by the number of references to public space in contemporary aesthetic discourse, the art world is taking democracy seriously.

When, for instance, arts administrators and city officials draft guidelines for putting "art in public places," they routinely use a vocabulary that invokes the principles of both direct and representative democracy: Are the artworks for "the people?" Do they encourage "participation?" Do they serve their

"constituencies?" Public art terminology frequently alludes to democracy as a form of government but also to a general democratic spirit of egalitarianism: Do the works avoid "elitism?" Are they "accessible?"

When it comes to public art, even neoconservative critics—no strangers to elitism in artistic matters—are out there with the people. Historically, of course, neoconservatives have objected to what Samuel P. Huntington once called an "excess of democracy"—activism, demands for political participation, and challenges to governmental, moral, and cultural authority. Such demands, wrote Huntington, are the legacy of "the democratic surge of the 1960s," and they impede democratic rule by elites. They make society ungovernable by rendering government too accessible: "Democratic societies cannot work when the citizenry is not passive."[1] Today, however, neoconservatives call the government excessive and attack the "arrogance" and "egoism" of public art, especially critical public art, precisely in the name of democratic access—the people's access to public space.[2]

Opinions on the best-known recent controversy over public art—the removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* from New York's Federal Plaza—also focused, at least for opponents of the sculpture, on democratic access. "This is a day for the people to rejoice," declared William Diamond of the federal government's Art-in-Architecture Program on the day *Tilted Arc* was destroyed, "because now the plaza returns rightfully to the people." But supporters of the sculpture, testifying at the hearing convened to decide *Tilted Arc*'s fate, *defended* the work under the banner of democracy, upholding the artist's right to free expression or portraying the hearing itself as destructive of democratic processes.[3]

Others, equally committed to public art yet reluctant to take sides in such controversies, seek instead to resolve confrontations between artists and other users of space by creating procedures generally described as "democratic": "community involvement" in the selection of works of art or the "integration" of artworks with the spaces they occupy. Such procedures may be necessary, in some cases even fruitful, but to take for granted that they are democratic is to presume that the task of democracy is to settle, rather than sustain, conflict.

Yet no topic is itself more embattled than democracy, which, as even these few examples show, can be taken seriously in more ways than one. The emergence

of this topic in the art world is part of a far more extensive eruption of debates about the meaning of democracy currently taking place in many arenas: political philosophy, new social movements, educational theory, legal studies, and mass-media and popular culture. As a site of such debates—and not, as critics frequently claim, because public art is located in universally accessible public sites—discourse about public art reaches beyond the boundaries of arcane art-world concerns.

The question of democracy has, of course, been raised internationally by challenges to racially oppressive African governments, Latin American dictator-ships, and Soviet-style state socialism. Widely touted as the "triumph of democ-racy" and equated with the supposed deaths of socialism and Marxism, these challenges have propelled the use of democracy as a catchword that glosses over the uncertainties of contemporary political life, but they have also cast doubt on such rhetoric, posing the question of democracy as, precisely, a question.

For critics on the left, sensitivity to and uncertainty about democracy stems not only from recent discredit brought upon totalitarian regimes. Leftists of various kinds have long been aware that totalitarianism is no mere betrayal of Marxism. They have been troubled by the failure of Marx himself and orthodox Marxists to appreciate fully ideas about freedom and human rights. The most ossified forms of Marxism have been so preoccupied with challenging bourgeois democracy as a mystified form of capitalist class rule and with insisting that economic equality guarantees true or "concrete" democracy that, as one writer says, they have been "unable to discern freedom in democracy" or "servitude in totalitarianism."[4] But the rejection of economistic notions of democracy and of totalitarianism is clearly no reason to remain content with anticommunism. For, as Nancy Fraser sensibly reminds us, "There is still quite a lot to object to in our own actually existing democracy."[5] Powerful voices in the United States often convert "freedom" and "equality" into slogans under which the liberal democracies of advanced capitalist countries are held up as exemplary social systems, the sole political model for socie-ties emerging from dictatorships and actually existing socialism. Yet the relentless escalation of economic inequality in Western democracies since the late 1970s—the U.S. taking the lead in this respect—the growth of corporate power, and fierce attacks on the rights of expendable groups of people reveal the dangers of adopting

a celebratory attitude. Taking issue with Francis Fukuyama's thesis that human struggle against tyranny inevitably ends with capitalist democracy, Chantal Mouffe writes, "We have, in fact, to acknowledge that the victory of liberal democracy is due more to the collapse of its enemy than to its own successes."[6]

At the same time, a countervailing democratic force has also emerged—the proliferation of new political practices inspired by the idea of rights: movements for the right to housing, privacy, and freedom of movement for homeless residents, for instance, or declarations of the right of gays and lesbians to a public sexual culture. Aimed at gaining recognition for collective and marginalized particularities, these new movements defend—and extend—acquired rights, but they also propagate demands for new rights based on differentiated and contingent needs. Unlike purely abstract liberties, these rights do not eliminate from consideration the social conditions of the claimants' existence. Yet while such new movements challenge the exercise of state and corporate power in liberal democracies, they deviate from the principles informing traditional left political projects. Focusing on the construction of political identities within society and forming provisional coalitions with other groups, the new movements distance themselves from overall solutions to social problems. They also refuse to be governed by parties claiming to represent the people's essential interests.

Over the last two decades, certain left political thinkers have sought to make room for these new types of political struggle, on the one hand, and to confront the experience of totalitarianism, on the other. This dual objective has led scholars like Claude Lefort, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Etienne Balibar, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, among others, to renew theories of democracy. A generative participant in this project is Lefort, a French political philosopher who in the early 1980s framed ideas that have since emerged as key points in discussions about radical democracy. The hallmark of democracy, says Lefort, is the disappearance of certainty about the foundations of social life. Uncertainty makes democratic power the antithesis of the absolutist monarchical power it destroys. In Lefort's view, the French bourgeois political revolution of the eighteenth century inaugurated a radical mutation in the form of society, a mutation he calls, following Alexis de Tocqueville, "the democratic invention." The democratic invention was

one and the same event with the Declaration of the Rights of Man, an event that shifted the location of power. All sovereign power, the declaration states, resides within "the people." Where had it previously lived? Under the monarchy, power was embodied in the person of the king who, in turn, incarnated the power of the state. But the power possessed by king and state ultimately derived from a transcendent source—God, Supreme Justice, or Reason. The transcendent source that guaranteed the king's and the state's power also guaranteed the meaning and unity of society—of the people. Society, then, was represented as a substantial unity, its hierarchical organization resting upon an absolute basis.

With the democratic revolution, however, state power was no longer referred to an external force. Now it derived from "the people" and was located inside the social. But with the disappearance of references to an outside origin of power, an unconditional origin of social unity vanished as well. The people are the source of power but they, too, are deprived in the democratic moment of their substantial identity. Like the state, the social order, too, has no basis. The unity of society can no longer be represented as an organic totality but is, rather, "purely social" and therefore a mystery. Unprecedented in democracy is the fact that the place from which power derives its legitimacy is what Lefort calls "the image of an empty place."[7] "In my view," he writes, "the important point is that democracy is instituted and sustained by the *dissolution of the markers of certainty*. It inaugurates a history in which people experience a fundamental indeterminacy as to the basis of power, law and knowledge, and as to the basis of relations between *self* and *other*."[8]

Democracy, then, has a difficulty at its core. Power stems from the people but belongs to nobody. Democracy abolishes the external referent of power and refers power to society. But democratic power cannot appeal for its authority to a meaning immanent in the social. Instead, the democratic invention invents something else: the public space. The public space, in Lefort's account, is the social space where, in the absence of a foundation, the meaning and unity of the social is negotiated—at once constituted and put at risk. What is recognized in public space is the legitimacy of debate about what is legitimate and what is illegitimate. Like democracy and public space, debate is initiated with the declaration of rights,

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themselves deprived in the democratic moment of an unconditional source. The essence of democratic rights is to be declared, not simply possessed. Public space implies an institutionalization of conflict as, through an unending declaration of rights, the exercise of power is questioned, becoming, in Lefort's words, "the outcome of a controlled contest with permanent rules."[9]

Democracy and its corollary, public space, are brought into existence, then, when the idea that the social is founded on a substantial basis, a positivity, is abandoned. The identity of society becomes an enigma and is therefore open to contestation. But, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, this abandonment also means that society is "impossible"—which is to say, that the conception of society as a closed entity is impossible.[10] For without an underlying positivity, the social field is structured by relationships among elements that themselves have no essential identities. Negativity is thus part of any social identity, since identity comes into being only through a relationship with an "other" and, as a consequence, cannot be internally complete: "the presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself."[11] Identity is dislocated. Likewise, negativity is part of the identity of society as a whole; no complete element within society unifies it and determines its development. Laclau and Mouffe use the term *antagonism* to designate the relationship between a social identity and a "constitutive outside" that blocks its completion. Antagonism affirms and simultaneously prevents the closure of society, revealing the partiality and precariousness—the contingency—of every totality. Antagonism is "the 'experience' of the limit of the social."[12] The impossibility of society is not an invitation to political despair but the starting point—or "groundless 'ground'"—of a properly democratic politics. "There is politics," says Laclau, "because there is subversion and dislocation of the social."[13]

It will be the Lefortian contention of this essay that advocates of public art who want to foster the growth of a democratic culture must also start from this point. Linked to the image of an empty place, democracy is a concept capable of interrupting the dominant language of democracy that engulfs us today. But democracy retains the capacity continually to question power and put existing social orders into question only if we do not flee from the question—the unknowability of the social—that generates the public space at democracy's heart. Instituted by the declaration of the rights of man, public space extends to all humans the free-

dom that Hannah Arendt calls "a right to have rights."[14] Public space expresses, in the words of Etienne Balibar, "an essential limitlessness characteristic of democracy."[15] But when the question of democracy is replaced with a positive identity, when critics speak in the name of absolute rather than contingent—which is to say, political—meanings of the social, democracy can be mobilized to compel acquiescence in new forms of subordination.

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Today, discourse about the problems of public spaces in American cities is dominated by the articulation of democracy in authoritarian directions. This movement is engineered in two interlocking steps. First, urban public spaces are endowed with substantive sources of unity. Particular uses of space are deemed self-evident and uniformly beneficial because they are said to be based on some absolute foundation—eternal human needs, the organic configuration and evolution of cities, inevitable technological progress, natural social arrangements, or objective moral values. Second, it is claimed that the foundation authorizes the exercise of state power in these spaces (or the power of such quasi-governmental entities as "business improvement districts").

But with this claim power becomes incompatible with democratic values, and public space is, to borrow a term from Lefort, "appropriated." When, that is, guardians of public space refer their power to a source of social unity outside the social, they attempt to occupy—in the senses of filling up, taking possession of, taking possession by filling up—the locus of power that in a democratic society is an empty place. Let us be clear. For Lefort, "appropriation" does not simply designate the exercise of power or the act of making a decision about the use of a space. Lefort does not deny the necessity of power or political decision making. Appropriation is a strategy deployed by a distinctly undemocratic power that legitimates itself by giving social space a "proper," hence incontestable, meaning, thereby closing down public space.[16]

A single example should suffice to illustrate the appropriative strategy in contemporary urban discourse, since this strategy has become so familiar. Today it travels under the slogan "the quality of urban life," a phrase that in its predominant

usage embodies a profound antipathy to rights and pluralism. Formulated in the singular, "the quality of life" assumes a universal city dweller who is equated with "the public"—identities that the phrase actually invents. The universality of this urban resident is called into question when we note that those who champion a better quality of life do not defend all public institutions equally. While conservative journalists routinely seek to protect municipal parks, they do not necessarily support public education, for example, or public housing. Yet how strongly do they even defend the publicness of parks?

In 1991 the *New York Times,* endorsing "The Public's Right to Put a Padlock On a Public Space,"[17] reported the triumph of a public space—Jackson Park, a tiny triangle in Greenwich Village that had previously fallen into disorder. Nearly a year later, a special "Quality of Urban Life" issue of *City Journal,* the voice of neoconservative urban policy intellectuals, corroborated the *Times*'s positive judgment and further inflated the little plaza into a symbol of progress in the ongoing struggle to restore public space.[18] Located on a traffic island, Jackson Park is surrounded by upper-middle-class houses and apartments and by a substantial number of residents without apartments. Following a $1.2-million reconstruction of the park, a neighborhood group, Friends of Jackson Park—a group the *Times* consistently mistakes for both "the community" and "the public"—decided to lock the newly installed park gates at night. The City Parks Department, lacking sufficient personnel to close the park, welcomed "public" help in protecting public space, a defense they equated with evicting homeless people from city parks. "The people who hold the keys," announced the *Times,* "are determined to keep a park a park."[19]

A preordained public space, the *Times* tells us, is being defended by its natural owners—a statement that inverts the real sequence of events. For it is only by resorting to an argument outside argumentation—"a park is a park"—and so decreeing in advance which uses of public space are legitimate that such a space first becomes the property of an owner—"the people who hold the keys." Increasingly, conservative urbanists promote the transformation of public space into proprietary space—the occupation of public space—by conceding that public spaces are conflictual not harmonious terrains yet denying the legitimacy of spatial con-

tests. *City Journal,* for instance, joining the *Times* in celebrating the "Jackson Park solution," notes that while urban analysts frequently ignore such problems, "what the homeless crisis has made unavoidable, is the clash of values created around contested spaces."[20] Whereupon, the *City Journal* avoids conflict by representing the decision to lock Jackson Park as the "reclamation" of "our" public space from "undesirables." The *Journal* portrays contests over city space as a war between two absolute, rather than political, forces: the Friends of Jackson Park, who are conflated with "the public" and who, backed by the local state, represent the proper uses that will restore the original harmony of public space and the park's enemies—homeless people who disrupt harmony.

In this scenario, recognition of conflict reassures observers that society might be free of division. The homeless person, represented as an intruder in public space, supports the housed resident's fantasy that the city, and social space in general, is essentially an organic whole. The person without a home is constructed as an ideological figure, a negative image created to restore positivity and order to social life. To appreciate this ideological operation, we might recall Theodor Adorno's postwar speculations about negative, that is anti-Semitic, images of Jews. Responding to the then prevalent idea that persisting German anti-Semitism could be defeated by acquainting Germans with "real" Jews—by, for instance, emphasizing the historical contribution of Jews or arranging meetings between Germans and Israelis—Adorno wrote: "This sort of activity depends too much upon the assumption that anti-Semitism essentially has something to do with Jews and could be combatted through an actual knowledge of Jews."[21] On the contrary, stated Adorno, anti-Semitism has nothing to do with Jews and everything to do with the psychic economy of the anti-Semite. Efforts to counteract anti-Semitism cannot, then, rely on the purportedly beneficial effects of education about "real" Jews. Such efforts must, rather, *"turn toward the subject,"* scrutinizing the fantasies of the anti-Semite and the image of the Jew that he or she desires.[22]

Elaborating on Adorno's suggestion, Slavoj Žižek brilliantly analyzes the construction of the "Jew" as an ideological figure for fascism, a process that, though not identical to, has important parallels with current constructions of "the homeless person" as an ideological figure.[23] Disorder, unrest, and conflict in the

social system are all attributed to this figure—properties that cannot be eliminated from the social system since, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, social space is structured around an impossibility and is therefore irrevocably split by antagonisms. But when public space is represented as an organic unity that the homeless person is seen to disrupt from the outside, the homeless person becomes a positive embodiment of the element that prevents society from achieving closure. The element thwarting society's ability to cohere is transformed from a negativity within the social itself into a presence whose elimination would restore social order. In this sense, negative images of the homeless person are images of a positivity. The homeless person becomes, as Žižek writes about the "Jew," "*a point at which social negativity as such assumes positive existence.*"[24] The vision of the homeless person as the source of conflict in public space denies that there is an obstacle to coherence at the very core of social life. The homeless person embodies the fantasy of a unified urban space that can—must—be retrieved.[25]

To challenge the image of the homeless person as a disruption of the normal urban order, it is crucial to recognize that this "intrusive" figure points to the city's true character. Conflict is not something that befalls an originally, or potentially, harmonious urban space. Urban space is the product of conflict. This is so in several, incommensurable senses. In the first place, the lack of absolute social foundations—"the disappearance of the markers of certainty"—makes conflict an ineradicable feature of all social space. Second, the unitary image of urban space constructed in conservative urban discourse is itself produced through division, constituted through the creation of an exterior. The perception of a coherent space cannot be separated from a sense of what threatens that space, of what it would like to exclude. Finally, urban space is produced by specific socioeconomic conflicts that should not simply be accepted, either wholeheartedly or regretfully, as evidence of the inevitability of conflict but, rather, politicized—opened to contestation as social and therefore mutable relations of oppression. For, as I have argued elsewhere, the presence of homeless people in New York's public places today is the most acute symptom of the uneven social relations that determined the shape of the city throughout the 1980s, when it was redeveloped not, as promoters of redevelopment claimed, to fulfill the natural needs of a unitary society but to facili-

tate the restructuring of global capitalism.[26] As the specific form of advanced capitalist urbanism, redevelopment destroyed the conditions of survival for residents no longer needed in the city's new economy. The gentrification of parks played a key role in this process.[27] Homeless people and new public spaces, such as parks, are not, then, distinct entities, the first disrupting the peace of the second. The two are, rather, dual products of the spatioeconomic conflicts that constitute the contemporary production of urban space.

Yet, as I have also argued elsewhere, public art programs, serving as an arm of urban redevelopment, helped produce the opposite impression. Under several unifying banners—historical continuity, preservation of cultural tradition, civic beautification, utilitarianism—official public art collaborated with architecture and urban design to create an image of new urban sites that suppressed their conflictual character. In so doing, they also constructed the homeless person—a product of conflict—as an ideological figure—the bringer of conflict.[28]

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In this pervasive atmosphere of conservative democracy, it might be seen as an encouraging sign that today's widespread enthusiasm for "public art" has been tempered from the beginning by uncertainty about the definition of the term. Artists and critics have repeatedly asked what it means to bring the word *public* into proximity with *art*. Writers alert to the problems that plague conventional concepts of publicness often begin their explorations of public art by questioning the identity, even the existence, of their object of study. In 1985 Jerry Allen, director of the Cultural Affairs Division of the City of Dallas, voiced this bewilderment: "Nearly 26 years after the passage of the first Percent for Art ordinance in Philadelphia, we still are unable to define exactly what public art is or ought to be."[29] Three years later, the critic Patricia Phillips concurred: "Though public art in the late 20th century has emerged as a full-blown discipline, it is a field without clear definitions."[30] Recent anxieties over the category "public art" could serve as a textbook example of the postmodern idea that objects of study are the effect, rather than the ground, of disciplinary knowledge.

Critics dedicated to public art's democratic potential but dissatisfied with its traditional classifications and uses have turned their uncertainty into a mandate to redefine the category. By 1988, writers like Kathy Halbreich of the National Endowment for the Arts had begun to insist that as an essential part of this redefinition "equal stress be placed on the words 'public' and 'art.'"[31] Soon the balance shifted even further, in favor of the first word. By now, attention to the term *public* is the touchstone of redefinitions of public art. Some writers have coined names, like Suzanne Lacy's "new genre public art," to designate the work of public artists who, as Lacy puts it, "adopt 'public' as their operative concept and quest."[32] Doubtless, these are steps in the direction of democratizing public art discourse. But critics often propose definitions of "public" that circumvent or eliminate what I, following Lefort, have called the question that gives rise to public space. Instead of describing public space so that it escapes appropriation altogether, those who challenge the conservative domination of public art discourse have largely reappropriated the term.

This tendency clearly dominates the principal forms of liberal public art discourse. For Allen, to give only one example, public art is a problem not because the meanings of art and public are uncertain or even subject to historical variation; on the contrary, problems arise because the meanings of the two terms are fixed in advance and inevitably clash:

> The very notion of a "public art" is something of a contradiction in terms. In it, we join two words whose meanings are, in some ways, antithetical. We recognize "art" [in the 20th century] as the individual inquiry of the sculptor or painter, the epitome of self-assertion. To that we join "public," a reference to the collective, the social order, self-negation. Hence, we link the private and the public, in a single concept or object, from which we expect both coherence and integrity.[33]

This formulation ignores the forceful challenge that certain key branches of twentieth-century art and criticism have directed against individualistic notions of

the artist as an autonomous self and of art as an expression grounded in this strictly private being. Individuals or artists may not be so securely private as Allen thinks. The dismissal of this possibility leads critics to support a rigid opposition between "art" and "public" that rephrases standard liberal dichotomies between individual and society, private and public. The public/private opposition has also been mobilized to unite, rather than polarize, "art" and "public." Critics often treat both art and the public as universal spheres that, harmonized by a common human essence, stand above the conflictual realm of atomized individuals, purely private differences, and special interests. In these cases, "public art" is not, as Allen assumes, a contradictory entity, but instead comes doubly burdened as a figure of universal accessibility.

Although the two formulations—art opposed to public, art united with public—place art on different sides of the public/private divide, they stay within the same polarizing framework. The failure to question this framework has led many critics to open and close the question of the public in a single gesture. While they note that public art is difficult to define and stress the incoherence of the contemporary public, they still equate public space with consensus, coherence, and universality and relegate pluralism, division, and difference to the realm of the private. They tacitly view the plurality and strife that characterize the public as problematic facts that supporters of public space must find procedures to reduce and finally eliminate. Allen, for instance, who offers a solution typically adopted by many public art advocates, initially acknowledges that art's "public context" is broad and heterogeneous. Public art cannot hope to express values held by everyone. Still, its goal should be to serve unified, if multiple, publics that, says Allen, can be found if artists suppress their individual egos and consult the people "immediately affected by the project"—preexisting groups or communities who use specific urban sites, distinct constituencies each defined by some common identification.[34]

Homogeneity and unanimity—frequently cast in the shape of "community"—become the object of quests for true publicness as some critics, while usefully documenting controversies fought over specific public artworks and even

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espousing controversy as a natural ingredient of the public art process, continue to associate public space and democracy with the goals of building consensus, consolidating communities, and soothing conflicts. At the same time they place the definition of democratic public space fundamentally outside controversy.

This dynamic is illustrated by a 1992 anthology titled *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy.* In the book's opening sentence, the editors tie public art to democracy: "Public art with its built-in social focus would seem to be an ideal genre for a democracy."[35] They continue: "Yet, since its inception, issues surrounding its appropriate form and placement, as well as its funding, have made public art an object of controversy more often than consensus or celebration."[36] The conjunction *yet,* which links these two sentences, performs important ideological work. It joins democracy—introduced in the first sentence—and controversy—introduced in the second—in an adverse relationship. Public art would be democratic *except* that it is controversial, or—in a more optimistic reading— public art retains its democratic potential *despite* the fact that it is controversial. "Yet" signals a reversal. Public art would seem to be democratic but instead turns out to be controversial. Controversy, moreover, serves as a foil for consensus, which consequently emerges as democracy's proper goal and is, further, associated with celebration. While the book's editors and many authors of the essays stress, or even valorize, disunity and antagonism, the word "yet" reveals an indecision at the heart of accounts of public art that interrogate the meaning of public space only to beg the question. "Yet" dissociates democracy from the fact of conflict and binds democracy to consensus-oriented, homogenizing notions of public space and public art. Conflict is simultaneously acknowledged and disavowed, a fetishistic process whose repressions generate certitudes about the meaning of public space. Later in *Critical Issues in Public Art,* for example, the editors simply repeat their universalizing assumptions: "The very concept of public art, defined in any meaningful way, presupposes a fairly homogeneous public and a language of art that speaks to all."[37]

Conservative and liberal aesthetic discourses are by no means alone in finding ways simultaneously to open and close the question of public space. Some of the most influential radical critiques of those discourses also try to dispel uncertainty. Many leftist cultural critics, for instance, search history to discover the origin

and essence of democratic civic life. In the Athenian polis, the Roman republic, late-eighteenth-century France, and the commons of early American towns, critics locate the spatial forms that supposedly embody such a life. This quest has become especially common among left urban and architecture theorists who, driven by opposition to the newly homogenized, privatized, and state-regulated public spaces created by advanced capitalist urbanization, have formed influential alliances. Michael Sorkin, for example, introduces his interdisciplinary anthology of critical essays, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space,* with a plea for a return to "the familiar spaces of traditional cities, the streets and squares, courtyards and parks," that are "our great scenes of the civic."[38] Sorkin concludes that in the new "'public' spaces of the theme park or the shopping mall, speech itself is restricted: there are no demonstrations in Disneyland. The effort to reclaim the city is the struggle of democracy itself."[39]

When Sorkin treats public space as the site of political activity rather than as a universal domain that must be protected from politics, he significantly redirects mainstream discourse about public space. He is right to link public space to the exercise of free speech rights and to challenge the current proliferation of sanitized urban spaces that tolerate little resistance to the most circumscribed uses.[40] But when Sorkin idealizes traditional city space as a "more authentic urbanity,"[41] a space essential to democratic politics, he avoids the politics of *its* historical constitution as well as the possibility of its political transformation. Within this idealizing perspective, departures from established spatial arrangements inevitably signal the "end of public space." Edge cities, shopping malls, mass media, electronic space (even, for the right, "bizarrely shaped" voting districts) become tantamount to democracy's demise.

The cover of *Variations on a Theme Park* discloses certain problems with this approach. It depicts a group of Renaissance figures, the men and women normally seen in quattro- and cinquecento paintings disposed throughout the perspectival, orthogonally ordered, and visually unified outdoor squares of Italian cities. But on the book jacket these inhabitants of a stable public realm are spatially and temporally displaced. With patrician gestures and flowing drapery intact, they find themselves riding an escalator in a new "antiurban" structure—perhaps it is an
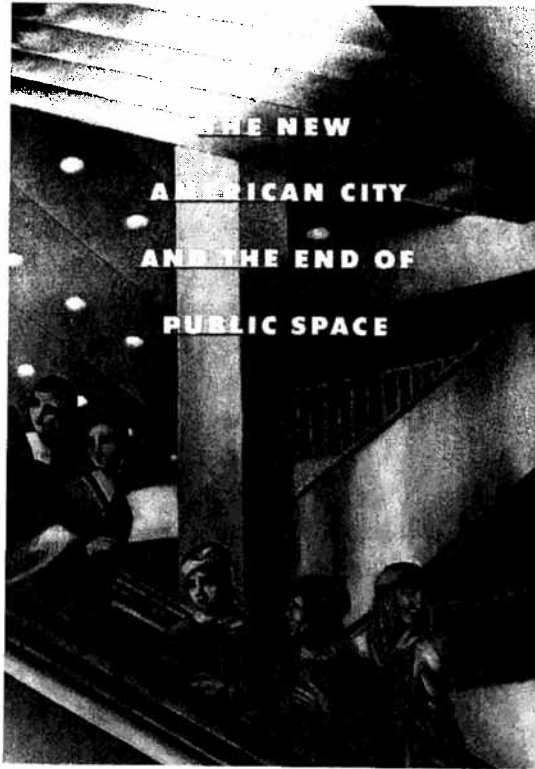
Detail of jacket of *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, edited by Michael Sorkin (photo Kevin Noble).

"inward-looking atrium hotel" or multilevel shopping mall—a structure which, according to the book's thesis, signifies "the end of public space." Appropriated to visualize this thesis, providing the literal background of the book's subtitle, the illustration links Sorkin's trenchant critique of contemporary urbanism to a strong current of urban nostalgia that indeed pervades many of the essays in the book.

There are good reasons for radical urban critics to eschew this connection. Most obviously, the turn to the past brings them uncomfortably close to conserva-

tive urban discourse. Throughout the boom years of redevelopment, nostalgic images of the city were employed by real-estate developers, historic preservationists, and city officials to advertise individual redevelopment projects as advances in an ongoing struggle to restore an ideal city from the more or less remote past. In New York, these projects were promoted as piecemeal contributions to the city's own "renaissance," the rebirth of a lost urban tradition. Redevelopment projects, it was claimed, would help restore New York to its place in a lineage of earlier cities that, centered on expansive public spaces, were harmonious in their entirety.[42] The tradition continues. For Paul Goldberger, the newly renovated Bryant Park in midtown Manhattan is an "out-of-town experience." His appraisal, like so many contemporary accounts of the city, implies that homeless people control access to public space: Bryant Park, he says, is a place the poor have begun to "share." Now it "feels as if it has been . . . dropped into some idyllic landscape far, far away."[43]

Public space, these comments suggest, is not only something we do not have. Rather, it is what we once had—a lost state of plenitude. Since it is lost, however, and not simply dead, we can recover it. "Whatever Became of the Public Square?" asked *Harper's Magazine*'s lead article in 1990 as a prelude to a search for new urban designs that will restore the public square—what *Harper's* calls "that great good place."[44] What is pictured on the cover of *Variations on a Theme Park* if not a loss? We see, in absentia, a zone of safety, a great good place from which we have been banished—at least those of us who identify with Renaissance city dwellers as exiled inhabitants of a democratic public space.

This qualification should give us pause. Pursuing specificity, it raises two sets of questions that can help sharpen currently hazy images of public space. The first inquires into the concrete identity of the sketchy people who exemplify supposedly true publicness on the cover of Sorkin's book. Which social groups were actually included, and which excluded, in the purportedly fully inclusive, or at least more inclusive, urban public spaces of the near or distant past? Who counted as a citizen in the "great scenes of the civic" figured as missing? "*For whom,*" as cultural critic Bruce Robbins asks, "was the city once more public than now? Was it ever open to the scrutiny and participation, let alone under the control, of the majority?

... If so, where were the workers, the women, the lesbians, the gay men, the African Americans?"[45]

Raising the issue of who identifies with the displaced residents of a classical urban square not only urges us to consider the attributes of the figures in an image of public space; it also turns our attention to the viewers of the image. It broaches a second question, one largely neglected, sometimes actively repudiated, in aesthetic discussions about public space: the question of subjectivity in representation. How do images of public space create the public identities they seem merely to depict? How do they constitute the viewer into these identities? How, that is, do they invite viewers to take up a position that then defines them as public beings? How do these images create a "we," a public, and who do we imagine ourselves to be when we occupy the prescribed site? If, as I have claimed, the cover of *Variations on a Theme Park* depicts a Renaissance square as the archetype of public space, then whose identity, in the present, is produced and reinforced by an image of public space tied to the traditional spaces of perspectival representation? What is public-ness, if it is equated with the fixed, all-seeing viewpoint that is the real subject of these Renaissance spaces? Who must be displaced to guarantee the authority of the single reference point? Is the possessor of this viewpoint really a public being— the individual who can remain safely behind the rectangular frame of its "window on the world," who can, like the figures in the image, walk into public space and just as easily walk out? Or is it possible that the displacement of this secure subject is not, as Sorkin's cover suggests, "the end of public space" but precisely the effect of being *in* public space, the realm of our "being-in-common" where, it is often said, we encounter others and are presented with our existence outside ourselves?

The same questions apply to another discourse about public space, closely related to *Variations on a Theme Park,* that has recently been embraced by left art critics. Like architecture and urban scholars, sometimes joining forces with them, critical sectors of the art world have tried to rescue the term *public* from conserva-tive depoliticizations by defining public space as an arena of political activity and redefining public art as art that participates in or creates a space of politics. For this purpose, critics have found a valuable resource in the category of the "public

sphere." This term is used loosely to designate a realm of discursive interaction about political issues. In the public sphere, people assume political identities.

The term inevitably conjures Jürgen Habermas, whose book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* provides the archetypal account of the public sphere as a lost democratic ideal.[46] Written in 1962, Habermas's study first appeared in English in 1989, but its basic tenets were already familiar to many English-speaking readers, partly through a 1974 translation of his brief encyclopedia article on the public sphere.[47] Habermas describes the public sphere as a specific historical formation first elaborated as an idea in Kant's definition of "enlightenment"—the use of reason for public criticism.[48] The public sphere, according to Habermas, arose with the advent of bourgeois society, which inaugurated a strict division between the private and the political realms. In the safety of the private sphere, the bourgeoisie could pursue financial gain unimpeded by society or the state. But bourgeois society, says Habermas, also gave rise to a set of institutions—the public sphere—through which the bourgeoisie could exercise control over the actions of the state while renouncing the claim to rule. In the public sphere—a realm between society and the state—a sphere in principle open and accessible to all, the state was held accountable to citizens. There people emerged from privacy and, casting aside private interests to commit themselves to matters of common concern, constituted themselves into a public by engaging in rational-critical political discussion. But in Habermas's view the public sphere declined with the entry of nonbourgeois groups, the growth of mass media, and the rise of the welfare state. These phenomena eroded the secure border between public and private life that for Habermas is the origin and remains the condition of the public sphere's existence.

One may question the homogenizing tendency glimpsed even in this brief description of Habermas's ideal of a singular, unified public sphere that transcends concrete particularities and reaches a rational—noncoercive—consensus. For now, however, let us emphasize that there are other conceptions of the public sphere less hostile to differences or conflict, less eager to turn their backs on critiques of modernity, and more skeptical about the innocence of either reason or language

and note the strong impact that any conception of a public sphere exerts on conventional assumptions about public art. For the interpretation of public art as art operating in or as a public sphere—whether it follows or rejects the Habermasian model—means that an art public, by contrast with an art audience, is not a preexisting entity but rather emerges through, is produced by, its participation in political activity.

The introduction of the concept of the public sphere into art criticism shatters mainstream categorizations of public art. It also helps circumvent confusions plaguing some critical discussions. Transgressing the boundaries that conventionally divide public from nonpublic art—divisions drawn, for example, between indoor and outdoor art, between artworks shown in conventional institutions and those displayed in "the city," between state-sponsored and privately funded art—the public sphere excavates other distinctions that, neutralized by prevailing definitions of public space, are crucial to democratic practice. By differentiating public space from the realm of the state, for instance, the concept of the public sphere counteracts public art discourse that defines the public as state administration and confines democracy to a form of government. The public sphere idea locates democracy in society to which state authority is accountable. With public space linked to political decision making and to rights and social legitimacy, arts administrators can less easily ignore the displacement of social groups from urban public spaces while continuing to describe these sites as "accessible." In addition, and perhaps preeminently, the public sphere replaces definitions of public art as work that occupies or designs physical spaces and addresses preexisting audiences with a conception of public art as a practice that constitutes a public, by engaging people in political discussion or by entering a political struggle. Since any site has the potential to be transformed into a public or, for that matter, a private space, public art can be viewed as an instrument that either helps produce a public space or questions a dominated space that has been officially ordained as public. The function of public art becomes, as Vito Acconci put it, "to make or break a public space."[49]

But one effect of introducing the idea of the public sphere into debates about public art overwhelms all others in the strength of its challenge to neutralizing

definitions: when critics redefine public art as work operating in or as a public sphere, the by now unanimous admonition to make art public becomes virtually synonymous with a demand for art's politicization. Art that is "public" participates in, or creates, a political space and is itself a space where we assume political identities.

Yet, offered as a response to the question of public space, the idea of the public sphere does not by itself fulfill the mandate to safeguard democracy as a question. In fact, the assertion that public space is the site of democratic political activity can repeat the very evasion of politics that such an assertion seeks to challenge. For, like the urban critic's defense of traditional city space as a terrain in which political discourse takes place, this assertion does not require us to recognize, indeed it can prevent us from recognizing, that the political public sphere is not only a site of discourse; it is also a discursively constructed site. From the standpoint of radical democracy, politics cannot be reduced to something that happens inside the limits of a public space or political community that is simply accepted as "real." Politics, as Chantal Mouffe writes, is about the constitution of the political community.[50] It is about the spatializing operations that produce a space of politics. If democracy means that the political community—the public, "we, the people"— has no absolute basis, then laying down the foundations that mark off a political public space, deciding what is legitimate and illegitimate there, is an ineluctably political process. Distinctions and similarities are drawn, exclusions enacted, decisions made. However much the democratic public sphere promises openness and accessibility, it can never be a fully inclusive or fully constituted political community. It is, from the start, a strategy of distinction, dependent on constitutive exclusions, the attempt to place something outside.[51] Conflict, division, and instability, then, do not ruin the democratic public sphere; they are the conditions of its existence. The threat arises with efforts to supersede conflict, for the public sphere remains democratic only insofar as its exclusions are taken into account and open to contestation. When the exclusions governing the constitution of political public space are naturalized and contests erased by declaring particular forms of space inherently, eternally, or self-evidently public, public space is appropriated. Although it is equated with political space, public space is given a prepolitical source

of political meaning and becomes a weapon against, rather than a means of, political struggle.

To undo this appropriation, the question of public space might be approached in a more genealogical spirit than has hitherto animated left aesthetic or urban discussions. We will not capture the truth of public space by recovering its origins. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, who conceived the term *genealogy* in opposition to nineteenth-century conceptions of history, the recovery of origins does not reveal the essential, unchanging meaning of a concept; it shows, on the contrary, that meanings are conditional, formed out of struggles. Precisely because the "essence" of publicness is a historically constituted figure that grows and changes, the public is a rhetorical instrument open to diverse, even antagonistic, uses that vary with widely differing contexts. The origin and purpose of an object of knowledge, Nietzsche warns, are two separate problems that are frequently confused: "The cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it."[52] Concealing a particular "system of purposes" by appealing to essential truths contained in the origins of the public is a ruse of authoritarian power that, glossing over the disjunction between a term's beginnings and its subsequent uses, renders "the public" invulnerable to transformation. In short, stories about the beginning of public space are not really about the past; they tell us about the concerns and anxieties inhabiting our present social arrangements. From a genealogical perspective, the question of what it means for art to be public may still be worth asking, but it calls for another question: What political functions does the exhortation to make art public—that is, political—currently fulfill?

PUBLIC VISIONS

Questions about the constitution, transformation, and uses of the public are, of course, not new in public art discourse, but directing them at critical redefinitions of public art is. Since the 1980s, art critics on the left have tried to reframe aesthetic debates about public space by abandoning normative evaluations of the word *public*

in favor of functional analyses that examine its uses in particular historical circumstances. In 1987, for example, Craig Owens noted "how malleable the concept of the public can be" and concluded that "the question of who is to define, manipulate and profit from 'the public' is . . . the central issue of any discussion of the public function of art today."[53] Owens examined the way in which rhetoric about "the public good" and "the protection of culture for the public" has historically provided an alibi for modern imperialism. Using Nelson Rockefeller's cultural and economic investments in Latin America as an example, Owens argued that individuals who represent the economic interests most deeply implicated in *destroying* other cultures in order to bring them into the sphere of capitalist social relations have also collected the artifacts of those cultures in the name of *preserving* culture for the public.

In the 1980s I criticized a similar rhetoric of the public good that provided an alibi for urban redevelopment.[54] Owens's and my arguments were part of a far broader effort in critical sectors of the art world to redefine the public so that the concept might be marshalled against two developments in art: first, massive economic privatization—the art-market explosion, attacks on public funding, growing corporate influence on exhibition policies—and second, the growth of a new public art industry serving as the aesthetic arm of oppressive urban policies. Owens and I each invoked the concept of art as a political public sphere to counteract the inversion we identified as the hallmark of conservative discourse about the public—forces that profit from the destruction of public spaces and cultures pose as their protectors.[55] "If culture is to be protected," Owens asked, "is it not precisely from those whose business it is to protect culture?"[56]

Today, however, critical voices in the art world cannot afford to formulate ideas about "real" public art solely by exposing the relations of domination concealed by liberal or conservative notions—any more than leftists have been able to confine their critique of democracy to uncovering the mystifications of bourgeois democracy while ignoring the authoritarian potential of some of their own ideas about "real" democracy. To do so is to claim that public space can simply be liberated from conservatives and liberals who have hijacked it from its rightful owners. The history of radical social thought cautions against making this claim—itself an appropriation of the public. Leftists do not simply represent the true meaning of

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public space. They, too, define and have, moreover, "manipulated and profited from 'the public.'" In critical social theory, as Nancy Fraser writes, "private" and "public" have long been powerful terms "frequently deployed to delegitimate some interests, views, and topics and to valorize others . . . to restrict the universe of legitimate public contestation."[57] Left art criticism needs to take a closer look at what—and at whom—its use of the term *public* forces into privacy. Setting critical conceptions of "art in/as a public sphere" against celebratory conceptions of "art in public places" or "the new public art" is by now a commonplace that hardly exhausts all contests over what it means to bring the word *public* into proximity with *art*.

Without in any way relinquishing this earlier critique, but in the interest of extending the scope of a genealogical inquiry into the meaning of the public in art, I would like to stage a different yet, to my mind, no less urgent confrontation: not the customary meeting between celebratory and critical conceptions of public space but an encounter between two critical events that took place in the New York art world during the 1980s. The adjective *public* figures prominently in both events but describes divergent concepts of space. The first is an exhibition entitled "Public Vision" held in 1982; the second, a talk delivered in 1987 by the art historian Thomas Crow at a panel on "The Cultural Public Sphere." Through this juxtaposition, I hope to bring to light certain suppressed terms of the current debate about art's publicness. The work exhibited in "Public Vision" represents a type of art that many consider irrelevant, even inimical, to the project of making art public. This judgment is implicit in the concept of an artistic public sphere that Crow espouses as the fulfillment of art's public functions. I will argue that the reverse is closer to the truth. As the exhibition's title suggests, art like that shown in "Public Vision" has long been part of the project of extending, not endangering, public space. The questions that this art raises are vital to democracy, and definitions of a political public sphere that reject these questions reveal a hostility toward a richly agonistic public life.

"Public Vision," organized by Gretchen Bender, Nancy Dwyer, and Cindy Sherman, was presented at White Columns, a small alternative space then on the edge of Soho in Lower Manhattan.[58] The exhibition brought together a group of

Public Vision, poster, designed by Jo Bonney, 1982 (photo Kevin Noble).

women artists whose work is associated with what would soon become known as the feminist critique of visual representation. The show was small, brief, and undocumented. In retrospect, however, it has the quality of a manifesto. Mounted at the height of an internationally proclaimed, male-dominated neoexpressionist revival of traditional aesthetic values, it announced the arrival of a new feminist politics of the image destined to unsettle established aesthetic paradigms. "Public Vision" also promised that art informed by feminist theories of representation would change the course of what was then the most radical critique of traditional paradigms: the discourse about postmodernism. In the early 1980s theories of postmodernism in art remained indifferent to sexuality and gender.[59] "Public Vision" was a feminist intervention in both mainstream and radical aesthetic discourses— a little-known forerunner of "The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter" (1983),[60] the highly influential "Difference: On Representation and Sexuality" (1985),[61] both originating in New York, and a host of later exhibitions that combined postmodern challenges to the universalizing premises of modernism and postmodern declarations of "the birth of the viewer" with feminist critiques of phallic visual regimes. "Public Vision" was less programmatic than subsequent exhibitions on these themes but, composed only of women artists, signaled a feminist agenda, even if the type of feminism informing the show was ultimately not gender-exclusive. Placing the work of artists who had already figured prominently in discussions of postmodernism—Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons—in a manifestly feminist context, the show promoted a rereading of this work.

"Public Vision" challenged the official modernist doctrine that vision is a superior means of access to authentic and universal truths because it is supposedly detached from its objects. The idea of visual detachment and related concepts of disinterested judgment and impartial contemplation depend on the belief that an order of meaning exists in itself, in things themselves, as presence. Within the modernist scenario of disinterested aesthetic vision, a self-sufficient viewer contemplates an equally autonomous art object that possesses meanings independent of the particular circumstances of its production or reception. Clement Greenberg's influential writings about modernism had defined modernist painting as the very figure of such a fully constituted truth—a self-contained totality—and treated vis-

ual experience as a pure, irreducible category isolated from other orders of experience. Vision was given the property of an essence.[62] The prestige enjoyed by traditional art rested on this doctrine of visual purity. Museums and galleries, it was held, simply discover and preserve timeless, transcendent values present in art objects.

In the late 1960s and 1970s certain artists launched a critique of art institutions that challenged the claim of aesthetic transcendence. Artists like Hans Haacke, Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Daniel Buren, and Marcel Broodthaers demonstrated that the meaning of a work of art does not reside permanently within the work itself but is formed only in relation to an outside—to the manner of the work's presentation—and therefore changes with circumstances. Indeed, the very designation of an object as a work of art depends on the work's framing conditions—including the physical apparatus that supports it, prevailing discourses about art, and the presence of viewers. The significance of an artwork is not simply given or discovered, it is produced. Artists engaged in what became known as "institutional critique" investigated this process of production by making the context of art's exhibition the subject matter of their work, thereby demonstrating the inseparability of the artwork from its conditions of existence. They transformed the exhibition spaces and museological apparatus through which illusions of aesthetic detachment are constructed. Sometimes they drew attention to the specific social and economic interests that "detachment" has historically served.

At the same time, feminist artists and critics were undermining claims of aesthetic neutrality by calling attention to the asymmetrical positions occupied by men and women in the history of art. As an important part of this project, feminists criticized the stereotypical, idealized, or degraded depictions of women—the so-called negative images—that abound in works of art. They held "transcendent" art and "universal" aesthetic vision accountable for the reproduction of what were in fact oppressive, social gender norms.

The work in "Public Vision" drew on the strategies of early critiques of institutions and early feminist critiques of aesthetic images but revised these strategies by challenging their presuppositions about the viewer. Institutional critiques often stressed the activity of the viewer but sometimes treated this as the accomplishment of a determinate task. Hans Haacke's work, for instance, invited viewers

to decipher relations and find content already inscribed in images but did not ask them to examine their own role and investments in producing images. Likewise, feminist analysis of images of women in terms of positive or negative content presumed that images contain stable meanings simply perceived by preconstituted viewers. Some images are false and deficient; others, true and adequate. This analysis thus lapses into a positivist fiction. By contrast, artists in "Public Vision" went beyond the positive-negative approach to produce what might be called "critical images." They unsettled the modernist model of visual neutrality at its core by proposing that meaning arises only in an interactive space between viewer and image—but not between preexisting viewers or images. Rather, these artists explored the role played by vision in constituting the human subject and, moreover, in the continuous reproduction of this subject by social forms of visuality. They did not confine their analysis of the politics of the image to what appears inside the borders of a picture, within the visual field. Instead, they turned their attention to what is invisible there—the operations that generate the seemingly natural spaces of the image and the viewer. In so doing, these artists treated the image itself as a social relationship and the viewer as a subject constructed by the very object from which it formerly claimed detachment. Visual detachment and its corollary, the autonomous art object, emerged as a constructed, rather than given, relationship of externality, a relationship that produces—is not produced by—its terms: discrete objects, on the one hand, and complete subjects, on the other. These subjects are no harmless fictions. They are, rather, relationships of power—masculinist fantasies of completion achieved by repressing different subjectivities, transforming difference into otherness, or subordinating actual others to the authority of a universal viewpoint presupposed to be, like the traditional art viewer, uninflected by sex, race, an unconscious, or history.

The works in "Public Vision" intervened in the subject constructed by modernist painting, disrupting and reconfiguring the traditional space of aesthetic vision. In diverse ways—I will give three examples—these works advanced toward viewers, disengaging them from habitual modes of aesthetic reception, turning their attention away from the image and back on themselves—or, more precisely, on their relationship with the image.

In one respect, Sherrie Levine's contribution, *After Egon Schiele* (1982), provided the exhibition's keynote. Levine displayed framed photographs of the sexually graphic drawings executed in the early twentieth century by Viennese expressionist Egon Schiele. Levine's display, like "Public Vision" as a whole, was a site-specific intervention in the early 1980s art world. She commented directly on the expressionist ethos then being celebrated in a widespread neoexpressionist revival of traditional artistic media—oil painting, drawing, bronze sculpture. In the expressionist model, a sovereign individual struggles heroically against the constraints imposed by a society that is strictly external and inevitably alienating. The artist registers his presence—embodied in painterly brushstrokes, traces of the touch of the hand—in unique works of art that are subjective protests against, and victories over, social alienation. The artwork is conceived of as an expression grounded in a preexisting, autonomous self—the artist and, by extension, the viewer who identifies with the expression.

Levine's reframing of Schiele's drawings ironically reenacted neoexpressionism's own reenactment of original German expressionism, exposing both expressionisms to scrutiny. Recontextualizing Schiele's drawings and presenting them as socially coded, reproducible forms of visual culture rather than unmediated, painterly expressions, Levine generated a moment of unrecognizability for the viewer. In this moment, the viewer's identification with the image—solicited by images whose meanings appear to be simply natural—was arrested. Viewer and image were displaced. Rather than an autonomous identity expressed in artworks, the expressionist self appeared as a construction produced through visual representation. Levine's re-presentation of Schiele pointed to an ambivalence in this construction, an ambivalence that further unsettles the idea that the subject is self-contained. The expressionist artist seeks to "express" himself, in the sense of recording emotional and sexual impulses, in images presented as evidence of an authentic, interior identity that cannot be alienated. At the same time, the expressionist artist tries to "express," in the sense of emptying himself of, dissonant impulses, which he controls precisely by alienating or projecting them onto an exteriorized image or other.

Cindy Sherman's contribution to "Public Vision" was an image from her

Sherrie Levine, *After Egon Schiele: 2,* 1982 (photo
courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery).

then ongoing project of photographing herself as a model acting out a range of
female character types drawn from mass-media images—movies, magazines, and
television (see pages 234–235). Sherman explored these characters not as repro-
ductions of real identities but as effects produced by such visual signifiers as fram-
ing, lighting, distance, focus, and camera angle. In this way she drew attention to
the material process of identity formation that takes place in culturally coded but
seemingly natural images of women. Sherman's photographs both elicit and frus-
trate the viewer's search for an inner, hidden truth of a character to which the

viewer might penetrate, an essential identity around which the meaning of the image might reach closure. Rosalind Krauss reminds us that this search for truth is the hallmark of the hermeneutic idea of art, an idea with, moreover, a gendered subtext: "The female body itself has been made to serve as a metaphor for hermeneutics . . . all those meanings to which analysis reaches as it seeks the meaning behind the surface flood of incident, all of them, are culturally coded as feminine."[63]
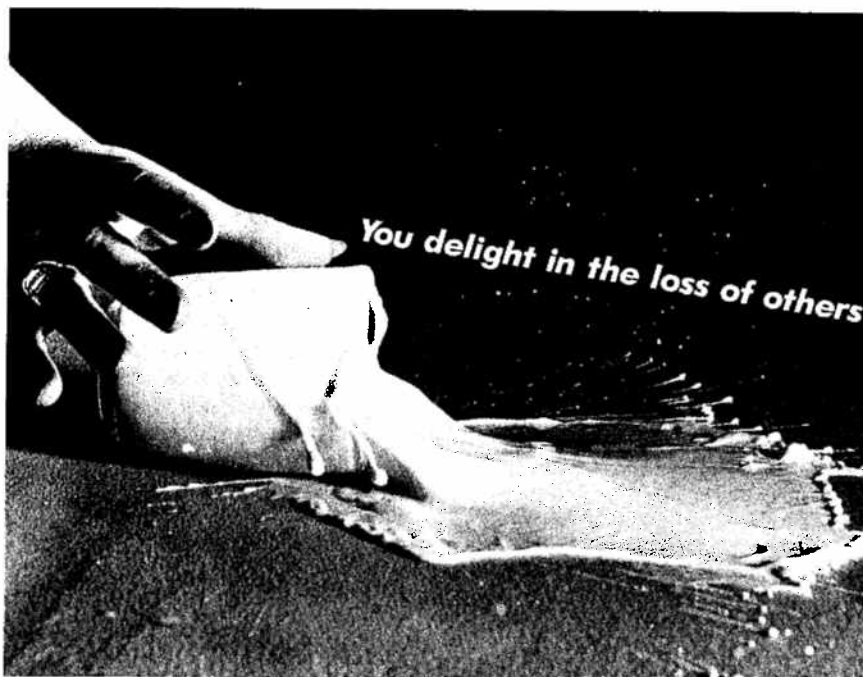
Sherman's photographs thwart this interpretive grasp by replacing the seeming transparency of the image with the opacity of cinematic and photographic signifiers. Interiority emerges, then, not as a property of the female character but as a social effect that marks the surface of the female body. And, as Judith Williamson writes, while each of Sherman's photographs calls forth the expectation that it will disclose a coherent, inner identity, none can actually be the "real" Sherman precisely because they all promise to be.[64] The viewer's attention is thus focused on the search itself, on the desire for interior depth, coherence, and presence in the picture, for an object that might ensure the viewer's own coherent identity. This desire for wholeness drives the unfulfillable search to find a unifying meaning in or behind the image, a search linked, moreover, to the establishment of the difference between the sexes. The masculine viewer can construct himself as whole only by finding a fixed femininity, a truth of the feminine that precedes representation. In this sense, the image of "woman" is an instrument for producing and maintaining a fantasy of masculine identity.

In Barbara Kruger's contribution to "Public Vision," *Untitled (You delight in the loss of others)*, a written text superimposed on a radically cropped photograph of a woman's outstretched hand dropping a glass of milk, is the vehicle for interrupting the rhetoric of the image—the strategies whereby the image imposes its messages on viewers. Bluntly addressing the viewer, the words "You delight in the loss of others" invoke the sadistic pleasures of voyeuristic looking, the pole of vision directly linked to the ideal of visual detachment: the voyeuristic look frames objects as images, sets them at a distance, encloses them in a separate space, and places the viewer in a position of control. Simultaneously, however, Kruger's text speaks as a feminist voice that undercuts the security of this arrangement. Her

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Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (You delight in the loss of others),* 1981–83 (photo courtesy Barbara Kruger).

image "sees" the viewer, collapsing the distance between the two. Kruger's ac-knowledgment of the viewer's presence asserts that receivership is an essential com-ponent of the image and erodes the invisibility that protects the purportedly neutral viewing subject from interrogation. It does so, however, not to finger an actual viewer but to call the spectator's identity into question. The personal pronoun *you* does not indicate a real person; it has no stable or absolute referent.[65] "You" de-notes a position in a relationship with "others," a viewer constituted by its images. Kruger's photomontage also suggests that the spaces assigned to viewer and image in voyeuristic structures are bound up with hierarchical structures of sexual differ-ence—not just because women have historically occupied the space of the visual

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object and are literally looked at but because the voyeuristic look renders whatever it looks at "feminine"—if, as Mark Wigley writes, the feminine is understood as that which disrupts the security of the boundaries separating spaces and must therefore be controlled by masculine force. Masculinity in this sense "is no more than the ability to maintain rigid limits or, more precisely, the effect of such limits." [66] It has been argued that the iconographic figure of woman in images of women is less a reproduction of real women than a cultural sign producing femininity as the object of such masculine containment, as what Laura Mulvey famously calls "to-be-looked-at-ness." [67]

Kruger's "you" is counterposed to a photograph whose status as a feminized object is underscored by the fact that it depicts a woman: a woman's hand and, moreover, a part-object or symbolic equivalent of the maternal woman—the spiller of milk. "You" thus acquires a gender. It designates a masculine viewer who delights in an idealized self-image—whole, universal, without loss. Far from an essential identity, however, this masculine "you" is a site of representation, a subject, who emerges through two procedures, each designed to disavow incompleteness and each, therefore, pertaining to loss. This "you" renders different subjectivities absent—it overlooks them, loses them, and, of course, they lose. But it does so precisely by keeping the woman in sight, framing her as an image distanced from, but existing for, itself. This "you" tries to ensure its own coherence by setting itself in opposition to the feminine, transforming difference into a subordinated otherness, into a sign of incompleteness, into loss itself. The quintessential example of both procedures—and of their connection to vision—is the fetishistic disavowal of sexual difference inherent in the "perception" that woman, in contrast to man, is "castrated." The fact that woman does not have the phallus can only be translated into the perception that she has "lost" the phallus if, as Slavoj Žižek reminds us, it is presupposed that she should have it—if, that is, it is believed that there is a state of wholeness, signified by the possession of the phallus, from which it is possible to fall. The transformation of difference into castration disavows the fact that this lost state does not exist.[68] Rather, as Kruger's work suggests, the complete, self-possessed identity is from the start a contingent relationship, a "you" produced by inflicting loss on others.

But Kruger's work does not cry over spilt milk. The drive to control by looking cannot be abolished, but the visual image can resist taking shape as an object in whose presence the controlling look can develop. "You" can be undone as the image's hierarchies are weakened and its violences exposed. Indeed, Kruger's text and manipulations of the image imbue the photograph with an atmosphere of violence. It takes on the appearance of a cinematic close-up and acquires narrative implications. What has caused the woman's hand suddenly to open and the glass to fall? In movies, such partial images may tell the audience that a climactic and brutal event is occurring. Read in this way, as a film still, the photograph in Kruger's work suggests that an attack is being perpetrated against a woman; she is being stilled. The center of the action is displaced; it remains outside the frame. So does the assailant. At this point in the story, his identity may still be unknown to the moviegoer. Interpreted as the scene of an assault, the iconography of Kruger's photograph gives literal form to the artist's principal subject matter: the scene of vision. The offscreen aggressor is analogous to the masculine viewer who "delights in the loss of others." The victim corresponds to the woman immobilized in the image or, more broadly, to the feminine domesticated as an image. Visualization merges with victimization of its object. The viewer, like his cinematic counterpart, stays outside the borders of the image—at least until Kruger investigates his identity and, in so doing, unravels it. For this "you," Kruger's text reveals, is no independent and complete self. It cannot stand alone. Neither is the image a self-contained object. The autonomous subject is produced only by positioning others as objects of the look. Kruger's work finally suggests that the claim of visual detachment is not only an illusion but, as Kate Linker writes, a tool of aggression.[69]

Works such as those by Levine, Sherman, and Kruger opened up the modernist space of pure vision. Built into the architecture of modernist looking is an injunction to recognize images and viewers as given, rather than produced, spaces and therefore as interiors closed in on themselves. But art informed by feminist ideas about representation disrupts this closure by staging vision as a process that mutually constitutes image and viewer. Pure interiority, these works reveal, is an effect of the subject's disavowed dependence on the visual field. By exposing the repressed relationships through which vision produces the sense of autonomy—

by, in other words, exploring the viewer's noncontinuity with itself—this work also disturbs the sense that otherness is purely external. The opening of modernist vision creates a space where the boundaries between self and other, inside and outside, are challenged.

What is the point of calling this troubled space "public?" The phrase *public vision* has several connotations. It suggests that vision is shaped by social and historical structures; that the meaning of visual images is culturally, not individually, produced; and that images signify in social frameworks. In these respects, the term *public* implies that viewers and images are socially constructed, that meaning is public, not private. Used in the title of an exhibition that explored vision as an uncertain process in which viewers and images are not only constructed by a fixed social realm external to vision but also construct each other, the adjective *public* has more complex implications. It describes a space in which the meanings of images and the identities of subjects are radically open, contingent, and incomplete. "Public Vision" associated public space with a set of relations that exceed the individual level but are not strictly outside the individual. Publicness emerges as a quality that constitutes, inhabits, and also breaches the interior of social subjects. It is a condition of exposure to an outside that is also an instability within, a condition, as Thomas Keenan says, "of vulnerability."[70] "Public Vision" implied that the masculinist viewer's claim of disinterest and impartiality is a shield erected against this vulnerability, a denial of the subject's immersion in the openness of public space.

Yet it is just this impartial subject who, five years later, the art historian Thomas Crow described as the authentic occupant of public space and, moreover, as the possessor of a truly "public vision." Crow made these assertions as a participant on a panel about "The Cultural Public Sphere," one of two sessions devoted to this topic in a series of weekly discussions on critical issues in contemporary art organized by Hal Foster at the Dia Art Foundation. In the preface to the book that documents the Dia symposium, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture,* Foster explains that one such issue is "the definition of public and audience, historical and present."[71] Indeed, the Dia panels remain one of the most serious efforts to date to redefine public art in terms of its involvement in a political public sphere. As the

first speaker at the opening session, Crow inaugurated the effort. Both his original talk and a revised version published in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* begin by voicing the popular sentiment that the public sphere, in this case the public sphere of art, is lost.[72] Recently, however, in the years around 1968, it had been found. At that time, a group of "dematerializing" art practices sprang up, all involved in the singular project of criticizing the autonomy of the modernist art object. These practices—conceptualism, site-specificity, performance, installation art—promised, Crow says, to produce "a new art public which would be a microcosm, either actual or anticipatory, of a larger public."[73] They "are the ones we recall when we lament the loss of a public dimension and commitment for art. . . . As we look back, these practices feel as if they constituted a unity, a resurgent public sphere that seems diminished and marginal now."[74] Crow notes that "women's politics" found space "within" these practices (1). Later, he makes another feminist point, even questioning the rhetoric of loss pervading his own discussion: "One absence being registered in the sense of loss is the bygone unity provided by modernism, that is, by white-male-dominated elitist art and criticism" (2).

In his talk, however, Crow pursued a somewhat different line of argument. There, he suggested that the growth of women's politics and other new social movements was not part of the artistic public sphere but was responsible for its loss. The new movements, he said, had "balkanized" the art audience into separate groups, which, he thus implied, shattered the post-1968, coherent art public into ineffectual, frequently conflicting units. This does not mean that in Crow's view the public sphere was lost because the so-called balkanization created a disparity between actual art audiences and the ideal of a unified art public. For Crow, this disparity always exists. It is what defines the public as an ideal: "'The public' represented a standard against which the various inadequacies of art's actual consumers could be measured and criticized" (2). The public sphere was lost because new social movements no longer felt beholden to the unifying ideal. When they abandoned the attempt to approximate the ideal, Crow assumes, they simultaneously abandoned the attempt to create an artistic public sphere.

Crow's published essay deletes his earlier reference to the destructive effect of women's groups on the artistic public sphere, no doubt because he took seriously

the objections raised during the discussion period by people such as Martha Rosler: "I'm shocked by your suggestion that it was somehow groups like women who dragged the discourse away from the pursuit of some imaginary high public."[75] Crow took less seriously criticisms of the pursuit itself. If he no longer blames women for the decline of an art public and now even includes them as part of the resurgent artistic public sphere of the late 1960s, he does not alter, or even question, his model of the political public sphere or his conviction that it has vanished. He thus leaves the feminist challenge unanswered. For it is precisely this model that recent feminist analyses have questioned as a masculinist structure built on the conquest of differences.

Crow constructs a politicized history of modern and contemporary art based on the civic humanist ideals of modern political theory. A key element of this theory is a conception of the public sphere—a democratic realm where individuals take on identities as citizens and participate in political life. By treating the art public as a microcosm of this larger public, Crow tries to integrate modern aesthetics into a theory and practice of the public sphere that stands at the beginning of the democratization of political institutions. The art viewer, in Crow's account, becomes part of an art public in the same way that private individuals become citizens. When the individual emerges as a member of the public, or, by extension, when a viewer of art joins an art public, he relinquishes his particularity and special interests in favor of the universal interest. He becomes, to use Crow's term, "adequate," in the sense of impartial.

Crow takes these ideas from Enlightenment writers on art. In the eighteenth century, English and French aestheticians envisioned an art public based on a new model of citizenship. They wanted to establish a "republic of taste," a democratic citizenry of art that replicated the structure of a political republic composed of free and active citizens. The security of both republics, it was believed, was founded on solid, universal principles. Both represented the common good and were therefore deemed capable, as Crow suggests, of counteracting the division of labor, self-interest, occupational specialization, and individualism that divided large, modern commercial nations. Indeed, Enlightenment writers turned to civic humanism because they, too, felt that public space was lost and in need of restoration.[76] For

enlightened men like Joshua Reynolds, the analogy between the republic of taste and the civic public of citizenship had concrete, historical origins in earlier democratic civic formations. The republics of ancient Greece and Rome and Renaissance Italy provided these thinkers with a fertile source of examples of a once unified public sphere. For Enlightenment aestheticians, writes Crow, "The public of the Greek *polis* . . . had been ultimately responsible for the exemplary artistic achievements of antiquity. Similarly, the successful revival of the antique during the Renaissance was traced to the encouragement and scrutiny of the circumscribed citizenry of the Italian city-state" (2).

Prior to its current loss, Crow argues, the ancient civic humanist project of constructing an ideal public for art was rediscovered at three key periods of modern art history. Their differences notwithstanding, each period kept alive the ideal of a unifying—hence, public—aesthetic. Civic humanist aesthetics was first revived, as we have seen, in Enlightenment art discourse. Enlightenment theorists proposed that concentration on the unity of a pictorial composition elevated the art viewer above the private, material interests that, Crow says, were enshrined by the growth of capitalism. Then, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "civic humanist aesthetics" reappeared as a kind of unconscious subtext of modernist abstraction. Modernism, says Crow, citing Clement Greenberg, also sought to create an abstract pictorial unity in the contemplation of which the viewer's "private, contentious self would be set aside" (7). True, Crow concedes, the political origins of the search for a unified art public were repressed in modernism. Still, by aspiring to create transcendent aesthetic form, modernist artists also tried, as Greenberg famously claims, to oppose the rise of commercial culture and so registered their antipathy to capitalism. Finally, civic humanism resurfaced in a newly politicized form in the "dematerializing practices" of the late 1960s. These practices, says Crow, once again sought to unify viewers, only this time in opposition to the modernist fetishization of the art object, a process originating in commodity fetishism and invading all aspects of life in capitalist society.

Crow unites these three periods as moments in the history of the formation of an artistic public sphere.[77] He suggests further that at each moment conceptions of the art public and the political public fused around a common idea of vision. The aesthetic vision supposedly cultivated at all three moments is akin to the politi-

cal vision possessed by the ideal citizen of the civic public. Crow projects onto nineteenth- and twentieth-century art a similarity between aesthetic contemplation and membership in a political community—between taste and "the more serious duties of life"—that is inherent in Enlightenment aesthetics. John Barrell, author of an important critical study of eighteenth-century British art criticism, observes that for Reynolds, who consistently combined visual and political terminology, "the exercise of taste was . . . a mode of exercising the same faculties as were exercised in the contemplation of society and its interest."[78] The criteria for membership in the republic of taste and in the political republic were identical: the ability to comprehend a whole.[79] Citing Reynolds, Crow notes with approval that for Enlightenment writers on art public vision "meant to see beyond particular local contingencies and merely individual interests." It was "a gaze that consistently registered what united rather than what divided the members of the political community." It guaranteed "the ability to generalize or abstract from particulars," reflected a "consciousness . . . undivided by private, material appetites," and expressed "a transcendent unity of mind" (3).

Crow embraces the civic humanist idea of public vision as a criterion to measure contemporary art and finds that it lacks a public dimension. This embrace has two important consequences. First, it places Crow squarely within a political camp whose membership extends far beyond the boundaries of art discourse. It aligns him with writers like, most famously, Habermas who hold that an emancipatory democratic politics must be based on a recovery of the unrealized ideals of modern political theory. At the same time, Crow's espousal of an Enlightenment concept of public vision places him just as squarely, though less overtly, against the feminist critique of vision that was first manifested in events like the "Public Vision" show and that had made a decisive impact on art criticism by the time of the Dia symposium. Crow does not concede the existence, let alone the influence, of art informed by feminist theories of vision. Nonetheless, indeed for that very reason, he tacitly opposes it. Omitting this work from the field of contemporary art, from his own aesthetic vision, Crow presents as an absolute a model of public vision compatible with the modernist ideal of disinterested contemplation—the very ideal identified by the "Public Vision" show as nonpublic. "Public Vision" agreed with Crow's premise that modernist aesthetics positions a disinterested

viewing subject but strongly opposed the idea that this position is located in a public space. On the contrary, "Public Vision" suggested that the production of an impartial viewer is an effort to escape from, rather than to enter, public space, which it associated with openness, contingency, incompletion—in other words, with partiality.

For Crow, however, the idea that public vision is impartial vision is a foregone conclusion. Within the borders of his vision, skepticism toward impartial vision cannot nourish a public space but can only be implicated in its loss. "Public Vision" cannot perform a political critique; it only jeopardizes politics. Crow's periodization of contemporary art confirms this judgment: art's public dimension falls into decline at the precise moment—the late 1970s and 1980s—when art informed by feminist ideas about vision begins to rise.

Feminist ideas about subjectivity in representation cannot be so easily expelled from the public sphere, for they, too, are part of a larger political discourse. The confrontation that I have staged between Crow's talk and the "Public Vision" show rephrases the terms of an important current debate about the meaning of public space and citizenship. Crow, as noted, joins the side of writers who hold that the modern idea of the citizen, based on an abstract concept of "man," is a necessary element of democratic politics. He applies this idea to aesthetic politics, likening the art viewer to the abstract citizen and invoking disinterested vision as a model of democratic citizenship. But art like that in "Public Vision" exposes the hierarchical relations of difference that produce the abstract subject of modernist vision, thus corresponding to critiques of modern political theory undertaken from the point of view that the modern idea of the citizen, although crucial for the democratic revolution, must be reworked if democracy is to be extended. The political philosopher Etienne Balibar comments that in the postmodern epoch, politics is being born "within and against" modern politics. The universalizing discourse of modern democracy, says Balibar, opened the right to politics to all humans. But postmodern politics poses "the question of going beyond the abstract or generic concept of man on the basis of generalized citizenship" and of "inscribing" the modern democratic program of general equality and liberty in singularities and differences.[80]

Insofar as postmodern politics is born "against" modern politics, one stake in the contest between the two is the ideal of impartiality, which Crow treats as self-evident but which others have challenged as "both illusory and oppressive."[81] The modern notion of the citizen depends on a strict opposition between an abstract, universalist public and a private realm of conflicting, partial interests. The opposition stabilizes the identities of both the political public sphere and its occupant, the citizen. But since the opposition generates the impression that the public and the private are discrete, enclosed spaces, it makes it seem as if these identities stabilize themselves. The public/private dichotomy performs other conjuring tricks. While it produces the public sphere as a privileged political realm, it also produces a privileged space *outside* political debate from which the citizen can observe the social world in its entirety. It produces, that is, the very private subject whose existence it presupposes.

In the civic public of citizenship, writes political philosopher Iris Marion Young, political discussion is confined to talk framed from the standpoint of a single, all encompassing "we." Members of the political community adopt a universal point of view, seek to discover the common good, and commit themselves to impartiality. As the hallmark of the public subject, impartiality does not mean simple fairness or consideration of other people's needs. It is equivalent to Reason:

> Impartiality names a point of view of reason that stands apart from any interests and desires. Not to be partial means being able to see the whole, how all the particular perspectives and interests in a given moral situation relate to one another in a way that, because of its partiality, each perspective cannot see itself. The impartial moral reasoner thus stands outside of and above the situation about which he or she reasons, with no stake in it, or is supposed to adopt an attitude toward a situation as though he or she were outside and above it.[82]

Civic republicanism, Young continues, constructs the ideal of a total, sovereign self "abstracted from the context of any real persons." This self "is not committed to any particular ends, has no particular history, is a member of no communities,

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has no body."[83] But this universal subject is neither the essential being nor the irreproachable public individual of the civic humanist imagination. It achieves completion by mastering and ultimately negating plurality and difference. Mobilizing a logic of identity that reduces objects of thought to universal principles, the impartial self seeks to eliminate otherness, which Young defines in three ways: the irreducible specificity of situations; differences among subjects; and desire, emotions, the body.

Young ultimately proposes an alternative to the modern view of citizenship that itself reduces difference to identity and thus retreats from some of the most radical implications of her own critique. This does not lessen the value of her contention that the impartial citizen is produced, like the detached viewer, through the loss of others—otherness in the self and others in the world. Hannah Arendt deplored the effects of this process three decades earlier. If, wrote Arendt, the "attempt to overcome the consequences of plurality were successful, the result would be not so much sovereign domination of one's self as arbitrary domination of all others, or . . . the exchange of the real world for an imaginary one where these others would simply not exist."[84] In a small but exemplary way, Crow's essay fulfills Arendt's predictions: it describes a contemporary art world from which feminist critiques of vision have simply vanished.

The positioning of a subject able to perform intellectual operations that give it information *about* the social world but owe nothing to its involvement *in* the social world has a corollary in the desire to objectify society. Impartial vision is possible only in the presence of an object that itself transcends partiality and is thus independent of all subjectivity.[85] Impartial social vision is possible only in the presence of "society" or "social space" as such an object. Construed as an entity with a positivity of its own, this object—"society"—serves as the basis of rational discussions and as a guarantee that social conflicts can be resolved objectively. The failure to acknowledge the spatializations that generate "social space" attests to a desire both to control conflict and to secure a stable position for the self. With the social world in its entirety set before it as an independent object—as what Martin Heidegger calls "a picture"[86]—the subject stands at a point outside social space from which it can purportedly discover the laws or conflicts governing that space.

Indeed, the subject becomes that external point, a pure viewpoint capable of penetrating beneath deceptive appearances to the fundamental relations underlying the apparent fragmentation and diversity of the social field.

Crow's discussion of the public sphere presupposes such an objectivist epistemology. He writes about social unity as if it is an empirical referent and speaks of the common interest as a substantive good. The public gaze "registers" what unites the community. What unifying element does it record? Crow does not answer this question directly, but he leaves clues. The unity of each of the three art-historical movements he designates as attempts to form an art public is ultimately given in each movement's opposition to capitalist economic relations. Moreover, antipathy to social division, which in Crow's account is attributed solely to capitalism, unites the three moments in a historical formation. Although Crow contends that public unity is an imaginary construct, public vision emerges in his text as a gaze able to perceive the foundation of an a priori social unity. His account of the public sphere thus mobilizes a fundamentalist logic that refers to a single antagonism—relations of economic production and class—that possesses an ontological priority to govern all other social antagonisms.

As many commentators have pointed out, feminist and other social movements that want to resist subordination to a privileged political struggle have a clear stake in disputing conceptions of public space based on such fundamentalist logic. For feminists, theories about art and public space that conform to this logic are problematic not just because, as Crow suggests, previous efforts to realize an art public have been dominated by white men. The problem cannot, moreover, be limited to the oppressive gender relations of civic humanist ideas. It is true, as John Barrell is careful to emphasize, that women were "denied citizenship, and denied it absolutely in the republic of taste as well as in the political republic" because they were believed incapable of generalizing from particulars and therefore of exercising public vision.[87] To be sure, discrimination against women is an important problem, but simply to protest the exclusion of women is to support the contention, routinely put forth by contemporary proponents of modern political theory, that the civic public ideal should be realized by including formerly marginalized groups. Leaving the ideal itself untouched, such a protest does not address the more

intractable sexual politics in which laments for impartiality and dreams of a sub-stantively unified public sphere are caught. These laments evince regret at the passing of a fantasy of a masculine self and attempt to restore what Homi Bhabha in another context calls "masculinism as a position of social authority"—a position historically occupied by men but with which women can also identify. "Masculin-ism as a position of social authority," writes Bhaba, "is not simply about the power invested in the recognizable 'persons' of men. It is about the subsumption or subla-tion of social antagonism; it is about the repression of social division; it is about the power to authorize an "impersonal" holistic or universal discourse on the rep-resentation of the social."[88] Masculinism as a position of social authority is also about the authority of traditional left intellectuals to account for the political con-dition of the entire world. What measures does it take to reestablish this authority in the name of the public? The foundations of society, the public, and the political subject—the citizen—must be treated as certainties. Feminist and other interroga-tions of the exclusions that constitute such certainties must be implicated in the loss of politics and banished from the public sphere.

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Something, then, is in danger of getting lost in the art world's redefinition of public space as political space, something that champions of lost public spheres seem bent on, even to delight in, losing. For the polarization of art informed by feminist explorations of subjectivity in representation, on the one hand, and a left criticism that forces this art into privacy, on the other, is no isolated occurrence. Discussions of public art often betray a suspicion of art practices that question subjectivity, as if this question has no bearing on art's publicness, distracts from public concerns, or, worse, jeopardizes political struggle, diverting attention from "real" problems of public space—homelessness, for example. Certain art critics define public art and public space by ignoring or trivializing the issues raised by such work.[89] Writers like Crow, their eyes trained on an image of the public totality, simply overlook feminist critiques of vision. Other advocates of art's public functions, even those otherwise receptive to new political projects, explicitly disparage feminist critiques

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of vision as nonpublic, a position held by some critics who support "activist" art. Take, for instance, those writers who hold that art's public status is ensured by the willingness, as critic David Trend puts it, of "progressive artists" to engage in "practical aesthetics." Practical artists, according to Trend, respond to the necessity of supporting the goals and identities of community movements and of all forms of social struggle that can be grouped under the heading "new social movements."[90] These activities, he says, promote "civic consciousness" through "political education" and, moreover, represent the "recovery of the public function of art."[91] Cultural scholar George Yudice agrees: by "serving the needs of particular communities and simultaneously publicizing their practice for wider access," artists are "recovering the public function of art."[92]

Yudice makes these remarks in an article that begins by opposing neoconservative proposals to eliminate public arts funding. Yudice's broader purpose, however, is to appropriate the definition of what makes art public from conservatives. How, he asks, has the art world most effectively disputed conservative mandates to privatize art production, reverse recent cultural gains made by oppressed social groups, and censor critical art that, conservatives assume, affronts public values? First, Yudice rejects liberal responses that merely defend the abstract freedom of the artist. Such responses, he says, reinforce depoliticizing ideas that art is autonomous and public values are universal. More viable contestations of the conservative agenda, he continues, have come from artists who politicize art practice by working within new social movements. At this point Yudice takes a significant, and questionable, step: he asserts that artists who work within new social movements "dispense with the frame."[93] By this he means that they operate outside conventional art institutions and have thereby "recovered the public function of art."

In today's political climate, there is, I think, every reason to support the contention that art involved with new social movements is a crucial public practice. Naming such "activist" work "public art" challenges an authoritarian aesthetic discourse that claims to protect both "the public" and "the aesthetic" and supports this claim by presupposing that each category rests on unquestionable criteria: standards of "decency" and of "taste" or "quality." These standards are alternatively characterized as transcendent, natural, or consensual. Because they are attributed

to an objective source, anyone who questions them is automatically placed outside the boundaries of the public and the aesthetic—indeed, outside "civilization." Yudice rightly points out that such references to absolute criteria are predicated on exclusions. Absolutist definitions of public space generate two kinds of privatization: they cast dissenting voices into privacy and appropriate—thus privatize—the public sphere itself.

A problem arises, however, when critics like Yudice, who want to take a stand against the authoritarian definitions of the public put forth by Jesse Helms and Hilton Kramer, redefine public art by erecting new public/private dichotomies—such as that between the inside and outside of art institutions. This division generates its own privileged public space and its own privatizations. As a consequence, proposals to redefine public art as art engaged in "practical aesthetics" themselves serve a practical function, one we have seen before: mapping a rigid "inside the institution/outside the institution" opposition onto an equally rigid public/private opposition, these proposals expel feminist politics of representation from the artistic public sphere. Listen, for example, to the first critic quoted above. Critiques of representation, says Trend, have no practical function because they are located in a space "outside social functioning." "Regrettably," he writes, "the art world is separated from social functioning by a complex mechanism that defines 'disciplines' in the arts and humanities" and that, "fragmenting knowledge, while distancing it from practical circumstances . . . drains the aesthetic of any practical dimension."[94] Work on the "politics of representation," if situated in an art institution and directed toward an art audience, "promotes an illusion of cultural practice that is socially disinterested and nonpolitical."[95]

Yudice agrees: "The 'politics of representation' engaged in by this type of art . . . this play on the constructedness of images . . . does not necessarily lead to changing the conditions that produced them in the first place."[96] Like Crow—but explicitly—Yudice measures art's publicness against work like that presented in "Public Vision": "Take, for example, Cindy Sherman's deconstruction of socially constructed representations of women in patriarchal society," he writes. "Despite the challenge to the authority of representation, her work is easily accommodated within the art world."[97] Sherman's work, in other words, performs no public function—it is private—because it does not "dispense with the frame."

In the name of the political public sphere, Yudice resurrects the very polarization that feminist critiques challenged for the express purpose of demonstrating that images are, precisely, public and political—the polarization between the formal operations of images and a politics exerted from the outside. When feminist critiques established a constitutive link between hierarchies of vision and hierarchies of sexual difference, they made it clear that images per se are neither private nor politically neutral. As a result, we can no longer take it for granted that art institutions are secure interiors, isolated from social space. The intimate relationship between vision and sexual politics shows that this isolation is a fiction. Far from nourishing the institutional frame, work on the sexual politics of the image undermines the boundaries that supposedly sequester the inside of the institution from its outside, the private from the public. The doctrine that aesthetic vision is the disinterested perception of pure form and universal truths, the doctrine underlying the illusion of the art institution's neutrality, is unsettled by the implication of pure form in the sexual pleasures of looking. And, as Jacqueline Rose writes, these pleasures are in turn part of an aesthetically extraneous political space.[98] To accept Rose's contention that work on images and sexed subjectivity threatens the closure—that is, the privacy—secured by the institutional frame one must accept, of course, that vision and sexuality are public matters.

Crow's and Yudice's redefinitions of the artistic public sphere produce the same casualty—feminist critiques of vision. This does not mean, however, that the two writers hold identical political positions. On the contrary: Yudice places new social movements at the heart of the artistic public sphere while Crow holds these movements responsible for the public sphere's demise. But the shared casualty is not a pure coincidence. Yudice and Trend can relegate art informed by feminist work on visual representation to a private space because they adhere, if inadvertently, to a foundationalist vision of a unified public sphere. What other vision makes it possible to assume with confidence that a so-called fragmentation of spaces inevitably destroys the public sphere or separates art from any public function? Critics who distrust fragmentation sometimes support their objections to art institutions by citing scholars who have analyzed the role of academic expertise and disciplinary specialization in depoliticizing knowledge. These art critics equate disciplinary specialization with the "isolation" of art institutions. Trend, for

instance, refers to Edward Said's essay "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community."[99] He mistakenly concludes, however, that the objective of politicized knowledge is not, as Said argues, to make visible the connections between scholarship and power but to restore the ultimate coherence of all political life and to do so, moreover, simply by abandoning the space of a discipline or, by extension, an art institution. With this abandonment, Trend implies, art enters an all-embracing social space and simultaneously recovers its public function. The public is turned, as Bruce Robbins writes, "into a mythic plenitude from which disciplines must then ceaselessly and vainly lament their impoverished exile."[100]

A similar logic underpins the idea that the politics of images can be reduced to the "conditions that produced them in the first place" and that changing these conditions is the sine qua non of public activity in the realm of visual culture. This reduction of an image's meaning to strictly external conditions echoes social theories that presuppose the existence of a foundation that not only forms the basis of but successfully governs all social meaning. Accordingly, meaning is localized in basic objective structures that become the principal objects of political struggle. Used to explain the meaning of images, these social theories smuggle back into art discourse an image of their own: a unique or privileged space of politics that feminist theories of representation have long rejected. Feminisms have contested this image of politics since it has been mobilized historically to relegate gender and sexuality to mere auxiliaries of social relations thought to be more fundamentally political. Now, with stubborn circularity, this image of politics subordinates the feminist politics of images to a public space assumed to precede representation. When critics who endorse a practical aesthetics uphold this image, they diverge from the premise on which feminist critiques of representation helped extend what I have called a democratic public space—the absence of absolute sources of social meaning.

Abandoning this premise, advocates of activist art also diverge from the more radical aspects of their own position. When they separate the politics of aligning art with new social movements, on the one hand, from the politics of vision, on the other, they do not appreciate that new social movements and feminist ideas about subjectivity in representation have something important in common. Both

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challenge foundationalist social theories and question, among other ideas, the tenet that class antagonism ensures the unity of emancipatory struggles. Is it not inconsistent to assert that an absolute foundation determines the meaning of images—a foundation that must be changed before art can be public—while supporting new social movements that declare their independence from such a foundation? These movements represent new forms of political identity that challenge traditional left political projects. They refuse to submit to the regulatory authority of political parties that exclude specificity and difference in the name of an essential political interest. Irreducible to a predetermined norm, new social practices offer the promise of more democratic kinds of political association.

Critics who support art's involvement with new social movements yet attack feminist work on representation as fragmenting and private undermine the very concern for difference that, in other ways, they vigorously defend. Though committed to plurality and opposed to conservative homogenizations of the public, they unintentionally align themselves with more influential critics who reject difference, especially those like David Harvey and Fredric Jameson who advance theories of postmodern culture based on neo-Marxist discourses about space. In earlier essays, I have criticized these theories.[101] Here I will simply add that Harvey and Jameson share today's widespread sensitivity to public space, seeking to appropriate space from capitalist domination and return it to the public. For them, too, public space is lost. Unlike Yudice, however, they acknowledge the similarity between the growth of new social movements and postmodern explorations of images and, instead of counterposing the two, reject both. Both developments, Harvey argues, spring from the fragmenting effects produced by post-Fordist restructuring of capitalism. Both also perpetuate fragmentation. The sheer immensity of late capitalism's spatioeconomic network precipitates a crisis of representation for the subject. It overwhelms our ability to perceive the interconnected social totality underlying apparent fragmentation and prevents us from apprehending our place—our class position—in the totality. This blindness keeps us from initiating the political action required to transform society. According to Harvey, the "confusion" of our perceptual apparatus is confounded by postmodern politics and postmodern aesthetics. Politically, fragmentation is manifested in the proliferation of

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new political identities that do not conform to a norm. Aesthetically, fragmentation occurs when artists concern themselves with images rather than a "reality" supposedly underlying images.

The notion that there is a crisis of, and inadequacy in, representations of the social world is only possible against the background of a belief in previously stable, univocal, and impartial—that is, adequate—representations, an illusion that justifies efforts to reinstate traditional authority. In the name of restoring public space, scholars who imagine, and identify with, a former golden age of total knowledge elevate themselves to a position outside the world. Others are demoted to secondary rank or worse. Within Harvey's spatial discourse, for instance, political reality is equated with uneven spatioeconomic arrangements. Homeless people, the most visible product of these arrangements, emerge as the privileged figures of political space. Efforts to talk about urban space from different starting points—or to address different spaces—are considered escapist, quietist, complicitous. Anyone who analyzes representations of the city not as objects tested against external reality but as sites where images are set up as reality and where subjects are produced is accused of callousness toward poor city residents and denounced as an enemy of the homeless. From a political point of view, this accusation is counterproductive for two reasons. First, precisely because we want to understand and change current representations of, and attitudes toward, homeless people, we must—to use Adorno's words—"turn toward the subject."[102] Second, the dismissal of questions of subjectivity often leads critics to invoke "the homeless person" less to promote social justice than to prove the sharper penetration of their own social vision.

COVER STORY

Earlier I asked what political functions are performed by the call in left art discourse to make art "public." One answer is that advocacy of an artistic public sphere has become a means of safeguarding the traditional space of left political projects. Under the protection of the word *public,* some critics return to unproblematized, precritical uses of the adjective *real*—real people, real space, real social problems, all presented as the ground of real political struggle. But art practices that question

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the exclusions that ground these "realities" do not, as their detractors claim, fall into privacy. On the contrary, these practices nurture the gestation of a different kind of public sphere that emerges precisely because our commonality is uncertain and therefore open to debate. Indeed, with new political formations taking shape before our eyes—with the propagation of demands for contingent rights, the proliferation of political projects based on partial critiques and aims, the growth of intellectual tendencies creating new objects of political analysis and toppling subjects of knowledge from their unsituated high grounds—public space has begun to look less like a "lost" entity than like what Bruce Robbins so compellingly calls a "phantom."

Robbins edited an anthology called *The Phantom Public Sphere*. In the introduction, he questions and stretches the meaning of the phrase "the phantom public," adopted from Walter Lippmann, who coined it in 1925.[103] In Lippmann's view, the public is a phantom because the democratic ideal of a responsible, unified electorate capable of participating in the machinery of government and able to supervise the state is unattainable. Modern citizens, he says, simply have no time to be sufficiently informed about all issues pertaining to the common good. Because the public is a phantom, Lippmann concludes, tasks of government should be relegated to educated social elites.

Like Lippmann, Robbins uses the idea that the public is a phantom to cast doubt on the existence of a unified public. But he does so to pursue different ends—not to relinquish the public sphere but to challenge the Habermasian ideal of a singular public sphere that has supposedly fallen into decline. For proponents of this ideal, recovery of a traditional critical public sphere is an alternative to proposals, like Lippmann's, for an elite management of democracy. For Robbins, the Habermasian ideal is itself a phantom because the very quality that supposedly makes the public sphere public—its inclusiveness and accessibility—has always been illusory. The lost public sphere was actually the possession of particular privileged social groups. On this point, Habermas would not disagree. While he knows that in practice the bourgeois public sphere was always exclusionary, Habermas wants to rescue the ideal from both its imperfect realization in its inaugural years and its later contamination by consumerism, mass media, and the welfare state. Far

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from criticizing the principle of a singular public sphere, he calls for its rebirth in an uncontaminated form. Robbins, drawing on Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, argues that the traditional public sphere is a phantom less because it was never fully realized than because the ideal of social coherence, for which the term *public* has always stood, is itself irremediably deceptive and, moreover, oppressive. The ideal of a noncoercive consensus reached through reason is an illusion maintained by repressing differences and particularities. To contrast a "contaminated" public sphere with either an earlier or a potentially pure public is to sustain the illusion. "What needs to be done, rather, is to investigate the ideal history of the public sphere together with the history of its decay in order to highlight their identical mechanisms."[104]

For Robbins, the idea of the public as a phantom has beneficial effects. It counters appeals to lost publics that he rightly fears can lead to authoritarianism. At the same time, Robbins finds the public's phantomlike quality unsettling because he recognizes that some conception of a public sphere is essential to democracy. Robbins invokes Lippmann's suspicion that the public is a phantom as an impetus to the left not only to examine its own preconceptions about the meaning of the public but to rethink its commitment to the protection and extension of a democratic public space. "In radical struggles over architecture, urban planning, sculpture, political theory, ecology, economics, education, the media, and public health, to mention only a few sites among others," writes Robbins,

> the public has long served as a rallying cry against private greed, a demand for attention to the general welfare as against propertied interests, an appeal for openness to scrutiny as opposed to corporate and bureaucratic secrecy, an arena in which disenfranchised minorities struggle to express their cultural identity, a code word for socialism. Without this discursive weapon, we seem to enter such struggles inadequately armed.[105]

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The phrase "phantom public" can be disorienting, then, because we cannot do without a concept of public space and are therefore reluctant "to see the public melt conclusively into air."[106]

Robbins uses the term "phantom" in multiple and ambiguous ways. First, he employs it to name—and criticize—ideals of a unitary public sphere that, he says, is not lost and cannot be retrieved. Robbins claims instead that this public sphere is a phantom, an illusion. When he associates the public's status as a phantom with its disappearance into thin air, he extends the term, representing the phantom as a danger to the public sphere. Later, however, Robbins transforms "the phantom public" into an alternative to (not just a critique of) "the lost public." His purpose, he concludes, is to push "the topic of the phantom public and its problems into a less backward-looking conversation."[107]

Latent in Robbins's text is the suggestion that while the lost public sphere is a phantom in one sense, more radical possibilities for democracy may lie in a public sphere that is precisely a phantom. Robbins's account leaves important questions in its wake. Taking the symbol of the phantom one step farther, we might ask if the lost public is constructed to deny that a democratic public sphere must, in some sense, be a phantom. Does the public's phantomlike quality hinder or promote democracy? Do we want to conjure *away* the phantom public, or rethink the public *as* a phantom? Which attitude—and which corresponding definitions of a phantom—should we adopt as we accept Robbins's mandate to rethink the public sphere? In short: Is the public sphere crucial to democracy *despite* or *because* of the fact that it is a phantom?

Some authors who have rethought the public sphere choose the first option. Iris Young, for instance, follows her trenchant critique of civic republicanism with a proposal to ground the meaning of the public sphere in difference rather than singularity. The civic ideal, she suggests, should be replaced with a heterogeneous public composed of multiple social groups. Citizenship should be differentiated by group. From a radical democratic perspective, her proposal to proliferate political identities and multiply political spaces is promising. Asserting that group differences are relational rather than substantive, Young argues persuasively against the universalizing civic ideal that marks only oppressed groups as different.[108] But even though she maintains that a group is differentiated by "affinity," not by any intrinsic identity, the politics of difference that she recommends ultimately consists of negotiating among preexisting demands of social groups already in place. Difference is reduced to identity, and Young seems to forget what she stressed earlier:

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that every difference is an interdependence. Consequently, she avoids some of the most important questions facing a politics of pluralism: Which conception of plurality can counteract the fact that the drive to identity may be tempted to stabilize itself by condemning differences? Which concept of plurality can work against the aggressive reactions of established identities as they are destabilized by new ones?[109] Such questions are beyond the scope of this essay. Let us simply note that Young's politics of difference glosses over them, defining difference as the "particularity of entities," although she says that particularity is socially constructed.[110] As a result, Young does not consider the productive role that can be played by disruption, rather than consolidation, in the construction of identity, a disruption in which groups encounter their own uncertainty. Her concept of a pluralistic politics disintegrates the public sphere as a monolithic space but resolidifies it as an array of positive identities. This pluralism does not pursue the most radical implications of the uncertainty that Young herself introduced into the concept of the public when she questioned the logic of identity and metaphysics of presence underpinning the modern ideal. Stepping back from the complexity of her earlier critique and falling into a discourse of entities rather than relationships, Young presents an alternative whose objective, it appears, is to realize the public sphere as a fully inclusive, fully constituted realm and to dispel the phantom public, which she construes only as the illusion of a singular public.

Critical theorist Thomas Keenan approaches the question of public space differently. He, too, challenges the notion of a lost public sphere, considering it an illusion. But his contribution to Robbins's book recasts the democratic public sphere in the shape of a phantom.[111] Keenan links the public's ghostly aspect to the appearance, not disappearance, of public space. More precisely, he suggests that the public sphere rises as a phantom only at the moment of a disappearance.

Keenan's essay, "Windows: of vulnerability," uses an architectural element, the window, as a figure of the differentiation between private and public realms. Drawing on the pioneering work of Beatriz Colomina, Keenan connects historical architectural debates about the form and meaning of windows to current debates about the form and meaning of the political public sphere. "Any concept of the window," writes Colomina, "implies a notion of the relationship between inside

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and outside, between private and public space."[112] Does the window ensure or menace the rigor of the public/private divide? Does the window secure or erode the closure of the public and private realms generated by this divide? Like Colomina (though making different distinctions), Keenan links these questions to the status of the human subject. Do windows, as in traditional perspectival models, ground the subject by allowing its detached gaze to pass through the window and master a world framed as a discrete, external object? Or do windows let light—the exterior world—in and, interfering with vision, interrupt the subject's control of its surroundings and disturb the security of the interior? As Keenan remarks, "The more light, the less sight, and the less there is in the interior that allows 'man' to find comfort and protection, to find a ground from which to look."[113]

Light coming through the window is Keenan's conceit for a public sphere that he has rethought on the model of language. The public sphere, Keenan suggests, is not, as in traditional conceptions, an exterior space that we enter as private beings simply to use language impartially. It is "structured like a language" and thus makes impartiality inconceivable. Keenan's public sphere surpasses the level of the single individual and is more than a mere collection of other individuals. In this sense, the idea of a public sphere that is like language is no different from any other conception of the public. But, unlike classical notions of the public sphere, the public sphere modeled on language is not strictly opposed to the individual. Instead, it problematizes the possibility of a clear separation between public and private realms. For just as light comes through the window, language reaches us from a distance but cannot be kept at a safe distance, nor does it violate previously closed subjects. Rather, we are realized as subjects only by entering language, the preexisting social field where meaning is produced. The entry into language alienates us from ourselves, estranging us, as Freud said of the unconscious, from "our own house."[114] Language makes us present as subjects by dividing us and opening us to an outside. The inhabitant of Keenan's public sphere is not the unitary, private subject of classical public space. Language undermines our self-possession—depriving us of a basis inside ourselves—and it, too, is inadequate. Words do not equal "reality"; they do not give adequate expression to things as they are. There is no preexisting meaning in language—only differences between elements.

Composed of signifiers that acquire meaning only in relation to other signifiers—without a final term and therefore always in need of additions and open to disruptions—language is a singularly public and singularly unstable medium. "What if the peculiarity of the public," Keenan asks,

> were—not exactly (its) absence, but—the rupture in and of the subject's presence to itself that we have come to associate with writing or language in general? . . . In this sense, all those books and articles mourning the loss or disappearance of the public sphere in fact respond to, if in the mode of misrecognition, something important about the public—that it is not here. The public sphere is structurally elsewhere, neither lost nor in need of recovery or rebuilding but defined by its resistance to being made present.[115]

And what if this peculiarity of the public—that it is not here—is not inimical to, but the condition of, democracy? This, of course, is exactly what Lefort asserts when he defines public space as the open, contingent space that emerges with the disappearance of the thought of presence—the presence of an absolute foundation unifying society and making it coincide harmoniously with itself. If "the dissolution of the markers of certainty" calls us into public space, then public space is crucial to democracy not despite but because it is a phantom—though not in the sense of pure delusion, false impression, or misleading appearance. As Joan Copjec and Michael Sorkin argue, the "phantom public sphere is no mere illusion, but a powerful regulative idea."[116] Democratic public space might, rather, be called a phantom because while it appears, it has no substantive identity and is, as a consequence, enigmatic. It emerges when society is instituted as a society with no basis, a society, as Lefort writes, "without a body . . . a society which undermines the representation of an organic totality."[117] With this mutation, the unity of society becomes purely social and susceptible to contestation. If the public space of debate appears with the disappearance of an absolute social basis, public space is where meaning continuously appears and continuously fades. The phantom public sphere is thus inaccessible to political theories that refuse to recognize events—like new

social movements—that cannot be grasped in preconceived conceptual terms or without recourse to final intentions. The phantom public sphere is invisible from political viewpoints that limit social reality to the contents that fill social space but ignore the principles generating that space. If democracy is a form of society that is destroyed if it is positivized, a democratic public space cannot be a lost state of political plenitude that we want but do not at present have. "We never had what we have lost," says Žižek, for society was always ruptured by antagonisms.[118] Produced instead by the loss of the idea of plenitude, a loss that founds democratic political life, public space may be the space that we as social beings are in but do not particularly want.

If so, all those books and articles mourning the lost beginning of the public sphere are not mere responses to the fact that the public is not here. Taking the form of what Keenan calls misrecognition, they are, rather, panicked reactions to the openness and indeterminacy of the democratic public as a phantom—a kind of agoraphobic behavior adopted in the face of a public space that has a loss at its beginning. From a sociological perspective, agoraphobia is primarily an affliction of women. In city streets and squares, where men have greater rights, women devise strategies to avoid the threats that present themselves in public spaces. The phobic woman may try to define, and stay within, what she considers a zone of safety. She invents "cover stories": explanations for her actions that, as one sociologist writes, "do not reveal that she is what she is, a person afraid of public places."[119] For instance, an agoraphobic who walks in the gutter, which she feels is safer than the sidewalk, may tell people that she is looking for something she has lost.[120]

The phantom public sphere is, of course, a different kind of space. It is not coextensive with empirically identifiable urban terrains—although it is no less real.[121] It, too, harbors threats and arouses anxieties. For, as Keenan writes, the democratic public sphere "belongs by rights to others, and to no one in particular."[122] It thus threatens the identity of "man"—the modern subject—who in this space can no longer construe the entire social world as a meaning for itself, as "mine." In the phantom public sphere, man is deprived of the objectified, distanced, knowable world on whose existence he depends and is presented instead with unknowability, the proximity of otherness, and, consequently, uncertainty in

the self. No wonder this public sphere confronts the modern human type as an object of dread. Like the images in "Public Vision," it comes too close for comfort.

In this situation, the story of the lost public sphere might function in a manner analogous to an agoraphobic's cover story. The story of the lost public makes its narrator appear to be someone who is comfortable in, even devoted to, public space—someone who, akin to the figures on the cover of *Variations on a Theme Park,* is ill at ease when exiled from the public square. But while the story gives the impression that its speaker is unafraid of public space, it also transforms public space into a safe zone. The lost public sphere is a place where private individuals gather and, from the point of view of reason, seek to know the social world objectively. There, as citizens, they "find" the object—"society"—that transcends particularities and differences. There, society becomes possible. Founded, like all impartial totalities, on the loss of others, the lost public sphere closes the borders of the very space that to be democratic must remain incomplete.

Lefort analyzes totalitarianism as an attempt to reach solid social ground. Totalitarianism, he says, originates in a hatred of the question at the heart of democracy—the question that generates public space but also ensures that it remain forever in gestation. Totalitarianism ruins democracy by attempting to fill the void created by the democratic revolution and banish the indeterminacy of the social. It invests "the people" with an essential interest, a "oneness" with which the state identifies itself, thus closing down the public space, encircling it in what Lefort calls "the loving grip of the good society."[123] The grip of the totalitarian state closes the gap between state and society, suffocating the public space where state power is questioned and where our common humanity—the "basis of relations between *self* and *other*"—is settled and unsettled.[124]

"The loving grip of the good society" warns us of the dangers inherent in the seemingly benign fantasy of social completion, a fantasy that negates plurality and conflict because it depends on an image of social space closed by an authoritative ground. This image is linked to a rigid public/private dichotomy that consigns differences to the private realm and sets up the public as a universal or consensual sphere—the privileged space of politics. But the public/private dichotomy produces another privileged site outside social space and therefore immune from polit-

ical interrogation: the total vantage point or, in Lefort's words, "that point of view on everything and everybody," the "phantasy of omnipotence."[125] It is the security of this public/private divide, which shelters the subject from public space, that art informed by a feminist critique of the image has so forcefully challenged by insisting that identity and meaning are formed *in* public space and so questioning the possibility of external viewpoints. Laclau has written that the main task of postmodern culture in democratic struggles is "to transform the forms of identification and construction of subjectivity that exist in our civilization."[126] When art intervenes in the forms of representation through which subjects construct themselves as universal and flee from difference, should we not welcome it—along with art involved in new social movements—as a contribution to the deepening and extension of public space? Especially if we hope to prevent the conversion of the public sphere into a private possession, which is so often attempted today in the name of democracy.

9. Laura Mulvey, "The Oedipus Myth: Beyond the Riddles of the Sphinx," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 190.

10. Mary Ann Doane, "*Gilda:* Epistemology as Striptease," in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 102.

11. Teresa de Lauretis, "Desire in Narrative," in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 143.

TILTED ARC AND THE USES OF DEMOCRACY

1. For a discussion of moral rights, see Martha Buskirk, "Moral Rights: First Step or False Start?" *Art in America* 79, no. 7 (July 1991): 37–45.

2. Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). Subsequent references to this volume are indicated in the text.

3. For an analysis of relationships between discourses of utility and urban redevelopment and a discussion of the "new public art" see "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," in this volume.

4. Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1974), 420 (my emphasis).

5. Laurence Tribe, *Constitutional Choices* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 189.

6. Ibid., 203–4.

7. Stuart Hall, "Popular-Democratic vs Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of 'Taking Democracy Seriously,'" in *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), 123–49.

AGORAPHOBIA

1. Huntington is the author of the American section of *The Crisis of Democracy,* a report issued by the Trilateral Commission, a private organization founded in 1973 to engineer a new world order controlled by the liberal democracies of North America, Western Europe, and Japan. The commission included prominent government, business, academic, and professional figures. For a discussion of "The Crisis of Democracy," see Alan Wolfe, "Capitalism Shows Its Face: Giving Up on Democracy," in *Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Manage-*

ment, ed. Holly Sklar (Boston: South End Press, 1980), 295–306. Recently, neoconservatives have adopted a new rhetoric of democracy that diverges from the overt authoritarianism of the Huntington report. Claiming to defend public space, they have begun to celebrate what neoconservative journalists and political scholars call "the new community activism" or "the new citizenship." The new citizenship consists precisely of people making demands on government, which is itself now deemed "excessive." What makes the new activists acceptable, of course, is that they agitate against the placement of social services—homeless shelters, AIDS or mental health facilities—in their neighborhoods and, more broadly, against what conservatives call "the tyrannies of the therapeutic state." William A. Schambra, "By The People: The Old Values of the New Citizenship," *Policy Review,* no. 69 (Summer 1994): 38.

The concerns of the new activists—no matter how diverse the socioeconomic status of the neighborhoods they seek to protect—can therefore be grouped together to support three elements of conservative urban policy discourse: advocacy of cutbacks in social spending; the call for reliance on the resources of civil society—the capitalist economy as well as other nongovernmental institutions—rather than the state; denigration of government protection of civil rights, which are blamed for the "breakdown of public order" and decline in "the quality of life." "The project to restore civil society," writes Schambra, "is a bridge over one of the most troubling chasms in American society today—between conservatives and the inner city." *City Journal* agrees: "Citizens are rising to demand that the government stop dumping social problems onto their streets and start demonstrating a commonsense concern with the quality of life in the city's neighborhoods." Heather MacDonald, "The New Community Activism: Social Justice Comes Full Circle," *City Journal* 3, no. 4 (Autumn 1993): 44.

2. See, for instance, Eric Gibson, "Jennifer Bartlett and the Crisis of Public Art," *New Criterion* 9, no. 1 (September 1990): 62–64. Neoconservative devotion to the right of access to public space generally serves, of course, as a rationale for censoring critical art, eliminating government funding of the arts, and privatizing art production—a position outlined in Edward C. Banfield, *The Democratic Muse: Visual Arts and the Public Interest* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

3. For a discussion of the language of democracy used during the *Tilted Arc* debate, see *"Tilted Arc:* The Uses of Democracy," in this volume.

4. Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy," in *Democracy and Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 10.

5. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 109.

6. Chantal Mouffe, "Pluralism and Modern Democracy: Around Carl Schmitt," in *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 117.

7. Lefort, "The Logic of Totalitarianism," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 279.

8. Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy," in *Democracy and Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 19.

9. Ibid., 17.

10. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics,* trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack (London: Verso, 1985), 122.

11. Ibid., 125.

12. Ibid. Mouffe and Laclau formulate their concept of "antagonism" in distinction from both "contradiction" and "opposition," which designate relationships between objects—conceptual or real—that are full identities. Antagonism, by contrast, is a relationship that prevents the fullness of any identity. See Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* 124. Mouffe and Laclau also distinguish the negativity inherent in the concept of antagonism from negativity in the dialectical sense of the term. The negative, for them, is not a moment in the unfolding of a concept that is then reabsorbed in a higher unity. It is an outside that affirms an identity but reveals its contingency. Antagonism is not negation in the service of totality but the negation of a closed totality. Laclau, "New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time," in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), 26.

13. Laclau, "New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time," 61.

14. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1948), 296.

15. Etienne Balibar, "What Is a Politics of the Rights of Man?" in *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx,* trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1994), 211.

16. Since I am applying Lefort's ideas to a discussion of contemporary urban discourse, it is important to note that Lefort uses the term *appropriation* in an opposite sense from Henri Lefebvre, whose concept of appropriation has been so compelling for critical urban thought. For Lefort, appropriation refers to an action of state power; for Lefebvre, it denotes an action against such

power. This terminological difference does not mean that the ideas of the two writers are polarized. On the contrary, they have certain affinities. Although Lefort is not writing specifically about urban space, his appropriation—the occupation of public space by giving it an absolute meaning—resembles what Henri Lefebvre calls the domination of space—the technocratic designation of objective uses that bestow an ideological coherence on space. Moreover, Lefort's appropriation and Lefebvre's domination are similar to Michel de Certeau's notion of "strategy" as the relationship that becomes possible when a subject with power postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own*. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 36. All three endow space with proper meanings and uses and, in this proprietary manner, set up a relation with an exterior that threatens those uses. In fact, de Certeau uses the adjective *appropriated* to delineate a space—"a place appropriated as one's own"—that serves from inception "as a base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats . . . can be managed."

The actions described by Lefort, Lefebvre, and de Certeau call for countervailing democratic procedures: "depropriation" (a term that, as far as I am aware, Lefort does not explicitly use), Lefebvre's "appropriation," and what de Certeau calls "making do." In this context, depropriation and Lefebvre's appropriation have similar (though not identical) meanings. Like de Certeau's making do, they imply some kind of undoing by the outside of a space that has been made proper, a taking account of exclusions and differences, and consequent exposure of power where it has been naturalized and obscured.

17. Sam Roberts, "The Public's Right to Put a Padlock on a Public Space," *New York Times,* June 3, 1991, B1.

18. Fred Siegel, "Reclaiming Our Public Spaces," *The City Journal* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 35–45.

19. Roberts, "The Public's Right," B1.

20. Siegel, "Reclaiming Our Public Spaces," 41.

21. Theodor Adorno, "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?" in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective,* ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 127–28; translated from *Gesammelte Schriften* 10, pt. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1977), 555–72. Adorno continues: "So long as one wants to struggle against anti-Semitism within individual persons, one shouldn't expect too much from recourse to facts, for they'll often either not be admitted or be neutralized as exceptions. One should rather turn the argument toward the people whom one is addressing. It is they who should be made conscious of the mechanisms that provoke their racial prejudice."

22. Ibid., 128.

23. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 128.

24. Ibid., 127.

25. The idea that the visibility of homeless people might reinforce the image of a unified urban space casts doubt on the more common assumption of critical urban discourse—that the mere presence of homeless people in public spaces challenges the appearance of harmony that official representations try to impose on dominated urban sites (I make this claim, for example, at the beginning of "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," in this volume). The visibility of homeless people neither guarantees the social recognition of homeless people nor legitimates conflicts over public space; it is just as likely to strengthen the image of an essentially harmonious public space, which legitimates the eviction of homeless people.

But raising questions about the conditions and consequences of visibility does not negate the importance of maintaining the visibility of homelessness, where visibility implies resistance to efforts to expel homeless people from public space and coercively assign them to shelters. The demand for visibility, understood as the declaration of the right of homeless people to live and work in public spaces, differs from a specular model of visibility, in which homeless people are constructed as objects for a viewing subject. The first demand challenges established legitimacy, questioning the legality of state power in evicting people from public spaces. The presence of homeless people can, then, reveal the presence of power in places, like parks, where it was formerly obscured. As power becomes visible and drops its veil of anonymity, the homeless person also emerges from her consignment to an ideological image into a new kind of visibility. It is, then, imperative to struggle against the possibility that, as the state exercises its monopoly on legitimate violence and evicts the homeless from public spaces, both state power and homeless people will fade into invisibility.

26. See "Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection* and the Site of Urban 'Revitalization,'" and "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," in this volume.

27. For a case study of the role played by parks in gentrification and redevelopment, see "Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection* and the Site of Urban 'Revitalization,'" in this volume.

28. See "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," in this volume.

29. Jerry Allen, "How Art Becomes Public," 1985; reprinted in *Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places* (Arts Extension Service and the Visual Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, 1988), 246.

30. Patricia Phillips, "The Public Art Machine: Out of Order," *Artforum* 27 (December 1988): 93.

31. Kathy Halbreich, "Stretching the Terrain: Sketching Twenty Years of Public Art," in *Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places*, 9.

32. Suzanne Lacy, "Cultural Pilgrimages and Metaphoric Journeys," in Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 20.

33. Allen, "How Art Becomes Public," 246.

34. Ibid., 250.

35. Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster, ed., *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), xi.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 171.

38. Michael Sorkin, "Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park," in Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1992), xv.

39. Ibid.

40. The combination of profit-maximizing and desexualizing tendencies in contemporary urban planning is manifest both in the use of Disneyland as a model for contemporary urbanism and in the role played by the Disney Development Company in actual urban redevelopment. Since the publication of Sorkin's book, Disney has become financially and symbolically useful to the current partnership being forged in New York between real-estate interests and moral crusaders who want to repress urban sexual cultures. Disney's instrumentality emerged clearly in a recent *New York Times* article that announced the city's choice of the Disney Development Company and the Tishman Urban Development Corporation to rebuild the corner of 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue as part of the redevelopment of Times Square: "The $303 million project is the center-piece of state and city efforts to transform 42nd Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues from a seedy strip with its ever-present hustlers and sex shops into a glitzy family-oriented enter-tainment center. . . . But perhaps of even more value is the Disney name. In its effort to turn around a neighborhood long synonymous with urban danger and degradation, the city now has a partner that is a symbol of wholesome entertainment worldwide." Shawn G. Kennedy, "Disney and Developer Are Chosen To Build 42nd Street Hotel Complex," *New York Times,* May 12, 1995, B1.

41. Sorkin, "Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park," xv.

42. For an analysis of the functions of the preservationist rhetoric that accompanied redevelopment, see my "Architecture of the Evicted," in *Krzysztof Wodiczko: New York City Tableaux and The Homeless Vehicle Project,* exhib. cat. (New York: Exit Art, 1989), 28–37, reprinted in *Strategies* 3 (1990): 159–83; and "Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection* and the Site of Urban 'Revitalization,'" in this volume.

43. Paul Goldberger, "Bryant Park, An Out-of-Town Experience," *New York Times,* May 3, 1992, H34.

44. "Whatever Became of the Public Square? New Designs for a Great Good Place," *Harper's* (July 1990): 49–60.

45. Bruce Robbins, "Introduction: The Public as Phantom," in Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere,* Cultural Politics 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), viii.

46. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); originally published as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1962).

47. Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," *New German Critique* (Fall 1974): 44–55.

48. Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" in *Kant: Political Writings,* introd. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 54–60.

49. Vito Acconci, *Making Public: The Writing and Reading of Public Space* (The Hague: Uitgever, 1993), 16. This publication accompanied "Vito Acconci: Models, Projects for Streets, Squares, and Parks," an exhibition at Stroom: The Hague's Center for Visual Arts, 1993.

50. Chantal Mouffe, "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community," in Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London: Verso, 1992), 234.

51. Ibid., 235.

52. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo,* trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 77.

53. See Craig Owens, "The Yen for Art," in Hal Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture,* Discussions in Contemporary Culture, no. 1 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 23.

54. See "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," in this volume.

55. Owens discussed Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt's notion of an oppositional public sphere in the talk he delivered in 1987 as a member of a panel on the "The Birth and Death of the Viewer: On the Public Function of Art" at the Dia Art Foundation but published a completely different essay in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture,* the book that documents the panel.

56. Owens, "The Yen for Art," 20.

57. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," 131.

58. "Public Vision," an exhibition of the work of Gretchen Bender, Jennifer Bolande, Diane Buckler, Ellen Carey, Nancy Dwyer, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Diane Shea, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, and Peggy Yunque, organized by Gretchen Bender, Nancy Dwyer, and Cindy Sherman at White Columns, New York, 1982. White Columns, during this innovative period in its history, was directed by Josh Baer. I would like to thank Gretchen Bender for help in reconstructing "Public Vision."

59. For accounts of early postmodern theory's blindness to feminism, see Jane Weinstock, "A Laugh, A Lass and a Lad," *Art in America,* 71, no. 6 (Summer 1983): 8; and Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 57–82.

60. "The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter," organized by Jo Anna Isaak at Protetch McNeil, New York, 1983.

61. "Difference: On Representation and Sexuality," organized by Kate Linker and Jane Weinstock at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1985.

62. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *The New Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1966), 66–77.

63. Rosalind Krauss, *Cindy Sherman 1975–1993* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 192.

64. Judith Williamson, "A Piece of the Action: Images of 'Woman' in the Photography of Cindy Sherman," in *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), 103.

65. For an excellent discussion of Kruger's early work, especially of her use of the pronoun *you*, see Jane Weinstock, "What she means, to you," in *Barbara Kruger: We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture*, exhib. cat. (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1983), 12–16.

66. Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 138.

67. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and David R. Godine, 1984), 366.

68. Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991), 174 n. 38.

69. *Love for Sale: The Words and Pictures of Barbara Kruger*, text by Kate Linker (New York: Harry N. Abrams), 61.

70. Thomas Keenan, "Windows: of vulnerability," in Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 121–41.

71. Hal Foster, preface, in Hal Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, Dia Art Foundation Discussions in Contemporary Culture, no. 1 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987).

72. Following the strong critical response that Crow's talk provoked from other speakers and members of the audience, he substantially rewrote the text for the book documenting the Dia discussions. The published essay leaves his concept of the public sphere essentially unaltered, however, so that, by coupling the essay with the transcript of the original discussion that followed the panel and is included in the book, Crow's initial position can be reconstructed.

73. "Discussion, The Birth and Death of the Viewer: On the Public Function of Art," in Hal Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, Dia Art Foundation Discussions in Contemporary Culture, no. 1 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 24.

74. Thomas Crow, "These Collectors, They Talk about Baudrillard Now," in Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, 1–2. Subsequent references to this essay are indicated in the text.

75. "Discussion, The Birth and Death of the Viewer," 26.

76. John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 3.

77. Crow's use of civic humanism to create a unity between modernism and the "dematerializing practices" of the late 1960s is odd. The latter practices were, after all, opposed to the very aspect of modernism—the claim of transcendence—through which Crow relates modernism to civic humanist aesthetics in the first place. Crow can only overcome this contradiction by treating as a given his contention that the dematerializing practices sought, albeit differently from modernism, to unify the art audience. But this contention—and Crow's consequent assimilation of the critique of autonomy mounted in the 1960s and 1970s to the ideals of civic humanism—is itself highly problematic. In the 1960s and 1970s many of the artists undertaking a critique of modernism did so precisely to challenge, not to support, the notion that in museums or galleries, viewers are united as "citizens of art." For example, Martha Rosler's artwork *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* and her essays "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" and "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience" as well as Hans Haacke's various *Gallery-Goers' Residence Profiles* drew attention to the class, gender, or racial compositions of art audiences. Unlike Crow, Rosler and Haacke did not focus on the disparity between the social identity of actual viewers, on the one hand, and the supposedly transcendent viewer addressed by traditional aesthetic institutions, on the other, in order to set up the ideal viewer as "a standard against which the various inadequacies of art's actual consumers could be measured and criticized." Rather, these artists wanted to demonstrate that the transcendent viewer addressed by modernist aesthetic discourse is an imaginary entity, a disavowal of the fact that aesthetic space is itself immersed in conflictual social relations. Rosler and Haacke therefore challenged the illusion, perpetuated in aestheticism and civic humanism, of a higher, abstract unity among people who might really belong on different sides.

78. Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting,* 79.

79. Robert R. Wark, ed., *Reynolds's Discourses on Art,* 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 202.

80. Etienne Balibar, "'Rights of Man' and 'Rights of the Citizen': The Modern Dialectic of Equality and Freedom" in *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx,* trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1994), 59.

81. Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory," in *Feminism as Critique,* ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 60.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid. Here Young is citing Michael Sandel's critique of the radically unsituated subject. See Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

84. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 234.

85. See Samuel Weber's discussion of objectivity in "Objectivity Otherwise," in *Objectivity and Its Other,* ed. Wolfgang Natter et. al. (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 36–37.

86. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 115–54.

87. Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting,* 65–66.

88. Homi K. Bhabha, "A Good Judge of Character: Men, Metaphors, and the Common Culture," in Toni Morrison, ed., *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 242.

89. This denigration of questions of subjectivity in public art discourse is frequently supported by urban and architecture discourses—the very discourses introduced into the left art world in the 1980s in tandem with discussions of "the public" to forge more democratic concepts of public art.

90. David Trend, "Beyond Resistance: Notes on Community Counter-Practice," *Afterimage* (April 1989): 6.

91. Ibid.

92. George Yudice, "For a Practical Aesthetics," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 135.

93. Ibid., 134.

94. Trend, "Beyond Resistance," 4.

95. Ibid.

96. Yudice, "For a Practical Aesthetics," 135.

97. Ibid., 134.

98. Jacqueline Rose, "Sexuality in the Field of Vision," in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 231. Barbara Kruger cited this passage as an epigraph to her contribution to the second Dia panel discussion on "The Cultural Public Sphere," where, the week after Crow's presentation, Kruger and Douglas Crimp insisted, in different ways, on the relevance of issues of sexuality to the public sphere.

99. Edward W. Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 135–59.

100. Bruce Robbins, "Interdisciplinarity in Public: The Rhetoric of Rhetoric," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 115.

101. See "Men in Space" and "Boys Town," in this volume.

102. Adorno, "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?" 129.

103. Bruce Robbins, "Introduction: The Public as Phantom," in Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere,* Social Text Series on Cultural Politics 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

104. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere,* trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 3; originally published as *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972).

105. Robbins, "Introduction: The Public as Phantom," x.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid., xxiv.

108. Iris Marion Young, "Social Movements and the Politics of Difference," in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 171.

109. The reminder that difference is interdependence and thus raises these questions was made by William E. Connolly in "Pluralism and Multiculturalism," a paper presented at the conference "Cultural Diversities: On Democracy, Community, and Citizenship," held at the Bohen Foundation, New York, in February 1994.

110. Iris Marion Young, "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference," in Linda J. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism,* Thinking Gender Series (New York: Routledge), 304.

111. Thomas Keenan, "Windows: Of Vulnerability," in Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere,* 121–41.

112. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 134.

113. Keenan, "Windows: Of Vulnerability," 127.

114. Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis,* trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935), 252.

115. Keenan, "Windows: Of Vulnerability," 135.

116. Joan Copjec and Michael Sorkin, "Shrooms: East New York," *Assemblage* 24 (August 1994): 97.

117. Lefort, "The Question of Democracy," 18.

118. Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do,* 168.

119. Carol Brooks Gardner, "Out of Place: Gender, Public Places, and Situational Disadvantage," in Roger Friedland and Deirdre Boden, eds., *NowHere: Space, Time and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 349.

120. Ibid., 350.

121. In the course of this essay, as I examine current debates about "public space," I not only question the meaning of the term *public* but problematize the word *space.* As I tried to suggest from the opening sentence, space is not an obvious or monolithic category. It can be a city or a building, but it can also be, among other things, an identity or a discourse. Some critics try to keep these spaces separate, transforming the difference between them into an opposition, treating the first kind of space as more "real" than the second. In other words, these critics accept a classical opposition between the extradiscursive and the discursive—hence, between reality and thought—and map this opposition onto different categories of space. A democratic critique of space must, I think, break with these dichotomies. For no space, insofar as it is social, is a simply given, secure, self-contained entity that precedes representation; its very identity as a space, its appearance of closure, is constituted and maintained through discursive relationships that are themselves material and spatial—differentiations, repressions, subordinations, domestications, attempted exclusions. In short, space is relational, and consequently, as Mark Wigley writes, "There is no space without violence and no violence that is not spatial." Editorial, *Assemblage* 20 (April 1993): 7.

When critics draw an opposition between "real" or "concrete" spaces, which are supposedly constituted by extradiscursive processes, and other spaces that are held to be merely "metaphorical" or "discursive," they not only drastically restrict the field of "reality"; they also conceal the politics through which the space of their own categories is constructed, presupposing that the object of their discourse is a purely objective field constituted outside any discursive intervention.

Unproblematized references to real spaces seal off the spaces in question from contestation precisely by repressing the fact that spaces are produced. More than that, to draw a hierarchical opposition between spaces is to produce space, a political activity masked by the claim that one is simply addressing a real spatial object. If our goal is to reveal and intervene in the political struggles producing spaces, we should not focus on distinguishing hierarchically among heterogeneous spaces, on pronouncing one space inherently more political than another, calling some real and others metaphorical, or on defending traditional spaces—urban squares, for example—against the supposed dangers to reality of new spatial arrangements—such as the media, information systems, and computer networks. These approaches deter us from investigating the real political struggles inherent in the production of *all* spaces and from enlarging the field of struggles to make many different kinds of spaces public.

122. Keenan, "Windows: Of Vulnerability," 133.

123. Claude Lefort, "Politics and Human Rights," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 270.

124. Recently, Jacques Derrida has written something similar about totalitarianism when, in another context, he speculated that totalitarianism originates in the terror inspired by a phantom. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International,* trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

Derrida refers to a different phantom—not the phantom public sphere but "the specter of communism." In defining communism as a specter, Derrida recalls the famous opening line of *The Communist Manifesto:* "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism." Unlike Marx and Engels, however, speaking from a different historical conjuncture, Derrida writes about the fear that this specter called forth not in communism's adversaries but in its proponents. Derrida gives the *Manifesto*'s announcement a deconstructive inflection. For him, spectrality is a constitutive feature of communism. Communism is destroyed by being realized because it exists only in a disjointed space and time; it is never fully present but "always still to come." In this sense, communism stands for a destabilizing force that makes a fully constituted society impossible and therefore promises different solutions to social problems. This promise is not, however, directed toward and therefore beholden to an ideal—something known but not yet present. Rather, it exists only when society itself is a problem—open to unknown futures, unable to reach any real closure. Totalitarianism is the attempt to have closure. It is the consequence of an effort to escape society's essential incompletion and to bring about "the real presence of the specter, thus the end of the spectral." Totalitarianism, says Derrida, is "the monstrous realization" of a specter. By the same token, however, the collapse of totalitarianisms does not mean that communism is finished. Rather, it is freed from its monstrous realization to rise as a ghost and haunt capitalist societies.

Derrida likens the specter of communism to democracy. Communism, he writes, "is dis-tinguished *like democracy itself*, from every living present understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence effectively identical to itself." At this point Derrida's analysis seems to parallel that of Lefort: totalitarianism, an attempt to conjure away democracy, springs from discomfort with the idea that democracy's uncertainties cannot be finally resolved without its destruction. Slavoj Žižek has recently argued, however, that Derrida conceives of the specter as a "'higher' stratum of reality . . . that persists in its Beyond" and is thus itself a positivization. For Žižek, Derrida's specter gives "quasi-being" to a void and is therefore an attempt to escape something even more terrifying—"the abyss of freedom." See Slavoj Žižek, introduction, in Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994), 1–33.

125. Lefort, "Politics and Human Rights," 270.

126. Ernesto Laclau, "Building a New Left," in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), 190.