

Public Art Fund

New York, NY

The Public Art Fund, a nonprofit organization, has acted as a facilitator and advocate for contemporary artists and their work for the past 25 years. By providing artists with a support structure for the completion of public art projects, the Public Art Fund increases public access to contemporary art in New York. In recent years, it has presented works by a wide variety of artists, including Barbara Kruger, Tom Otterness, Tony Smith, Roy Lichtenstein, and Rachel Whiteread, to name only a few.

In April, 1999, the Public Art Fund launched a citywide exhibition in New York subway cars. Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio's *The Invisible City*, a series of comic strips, tells the real life stories of selected New York nightshift workers. Sperandio and Grennan located their subjects through newspaper classifieds, a Web site, flyers,

and by visiting several large companies and small businesses. After interviewing potential participants, they selected stories from a cable TV technician, a cocktail waiter at a gay bar, a late-night cleaner, and a security guard. Using the participants' own words, their stories were transformed into comic strips that were painted onto sintra boards and posted in subway car advertising spaces. In this way, *The Invisible City* brings the experiences of graveyard shift workers into the lives of morning commuters.

As part of its "In the Public Realm" program for emerging artists, the Public Art Fund invited Maria Elena González to complete *Magic Carpet/Home*. Installed in Coffey Park in Red Hook, Brooklyn, in May, 1999, *Magic Carpet/Home* consists of a black rubber surface that appears to hover one foot above the ground. On this undulating "carpet," González painted a scale plan of a typical apartment in Red Hook

East Housing. According to González, *Magic Carpet/Home* illustrates that "our home, and metaphorically our hopes, can be transported anywhere we choose."

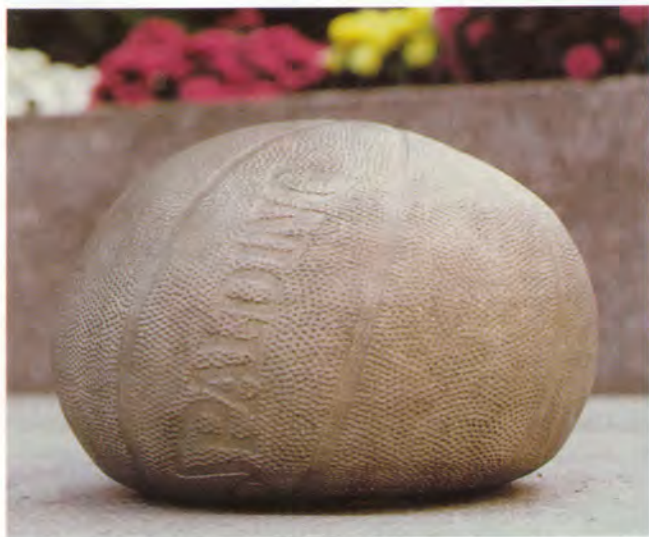
In May, 1999, Andrea Zittel installed *Point of Interest: An A-Z Land Brand* and *A-Z Deserted Islands* in Central Park. Situated at the park's southeast entrance, *Point of Interest* is constructed of concrete-covered steel armatures made to look like two giant rocks colliding at an acute angle and measuring 12 feet at the highest point. The irregularly shaped white Plexiglas boats of *A-Z Deserted Islands*, originally created for the 1997 Münster Sculpture Project, now float in the Central Park Pond. Both the rocks of *Point of Interest* and the mini-boats of *Deserted Islands*, each boat complete with a seat for one, encourage public interaction and are stamped with A-Z logos, which offer a critique of the public consumption of nature as urban enhancement.

In collaboration with Deitch Projects, the Public Art Fund sponsored Christine Hill's *Tourguide?* throughout the summer of 1999. Part performance art and part improv theater, *Tourguide?* provided participants with a tour of New York's unique and obscure sites, including a "door to nowhere," Hill's favorite luggage vendor, and the private residence of the Analogue Society's own Minister of Audiology. Hill says that *Tourguide?* is "a continuation of my work with how one presents oneself and how an 'artwork' relies equally on the audience as on the creator for its success... This project is designed to provoke interaction between people and subjects to yield a shared experience."

In August, 1999, Ron Baron completed his Public Art Fund-sponsored installation on the Hudson River waterfront. *Birds* consists of Nova



Andrea Zittel, *Point of Interest*, 1999.
Concrete and steel, 12 x 24 x 20 ft.



Clockwise from top left: Maria Elena González, *Magic Carpet/Home*, 1999. Wood, rubber, and paint, 1 x 27 x 39 ft. Sharon Louden, *Tangled Tips*, 1999. Electro-luminescent wire. James Angus, *Basketball Dropped from 35,000 Feet at the Moment of Impact*, 1999. Bronze.

Scotian lobster buoys installed atop the old pilings of Pier 34. Regarding the waterfront location, Baron says, "When I discovered this site I was instantly drawn to creating a project here. It embodies everything that I find compelling in the objects I collect to create my work; a sense of history and cultural significance, a feeling of loss and abandonment, and a strong visual power."

For the past seven years, the Public Art Fund has organized an exhibition

of work by young artists on the Commons at Metro Tech Center in downtown Brooklyn. This year's exhibition, "New Urban Sculpture," opened in October, 1999, and features the work of five artists who represent varied approaches to public art. James Angus's actual-sized *Basketball Dropped from 35,000 Feet at Moment of Impact* captures the distorted appearance of a basketball as it would appear when colliding with the ground. Sharon Louden used pale blue luminescent

wires for *Tangled Tips*, a gestural drawing in space that can be seen glowing in the treetops at night.

Crafted out of Styrofoam, wood, and paint, *Grand Entrance at the Commons*, by Jason Middlebrook, is an extremely realistic, though false, entrance that comments on the large architectural structures that mark the entryways to modern building developments. Inside the lobby of Metro Tech 1, James Carl installed *Dupes*, a set of precisely handcrafted, cardboard replicas of an ATM bank machine, a Fed Ex drop box, and an airport X-ray machine. Kirsten Mosher created *Local Park Express*, a park bench and planter equipped with wheels and a track. Offering an alternative to the highly planned and fixed park environment, Mosher invites viewers to adjust the placement of her park furniture according to their own needs and wishes.

—Ariane Fehrenkamp

Information on recently completed commissions, along with quality 35mm slides or transparencies and an SASE for return of slides, should be sent to: Commissions, Sculpture, 1529 18th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.