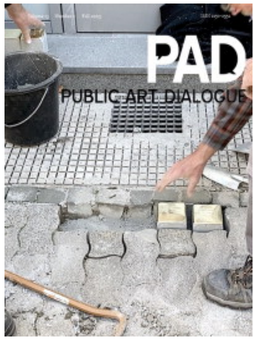

Routledge
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Public Art Dialogue

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rpad20

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To cite this article: Jana La Brasca (08 Apr 2024): The Paradox of Permanence, Public Art Dialogue, DOI: 10.1080/21502552.2023.2298114

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21502552.2023.2298114

Published online: 08 Apr 2024.

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Public Art Dialogue, 2024
Vol. 0, No. 0, 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/21502552.2023.2298114

The Paradox of Permanence

Jana La Brasca

This article considers sculpture parks through the lens of temporality, focusing on select outdoor artist projects of the 1970s and 1980s: a permanent installation by Donald Judd in Marfa, Texas; and ephemeral works by Alice Aycock, Mary Miss, Jody Pinto, and Michelle Stuart at Artpark, in Lewiston, New York, and Manhattan's Battery Park City landfill. While Judd intended to ensure permanence for his works, Aycock, Miss, Pinto, and Stuart created important early works that lasted for shorter periods of time and endure only through documentation, or "ephemera." These examples, I argue, illuminate permanence's inherent paradox: sculpture parks and the art in them must change to stay the same under fluctuating environmental, institutional, and social conditions. Placed in sculpture parks distinguished by varying relationships to matters of duration, each artwork discussed in this article also engages forms of enclosure—especially walls, natural or manmade—and openness to heighten a viewer's situated sense of space and time. Crystallized in artworks consisting of crumbling walls, punctured fences, and dissolving paper, the paradox of permanence requires critical rubrics that can bring permanent and ephemeral work together on a spectrum of impermanence, enabling scholars to generate a fuller and more inclusive history of sculpture, "parked."

The noun "park" derives from the Old French *parc,* defined in the fourteenth century as a "large, enclosed area of land or woodland maintained for the decoration of a castle or country house, or for pleasure or recreation, etc." It is also related to the Latin *parcus,* referring specifically to a wall or fence, used to contain "beasts of the chase."[1] By the nineteenth century, especially in the United States, the term's usage moved closer to what we think of today: "a large public garden or area of land used for recreation … set apart as public property, to be kept in its natural state for the benefit of the public and the preservation of wildlife."[2] As for the verb form, we began to "park" artillery, vehicles, and other military supplies by the nineteenth century, and early automobile "parks" accompanied the rise of modern car culture by the nineteen-tens.[3] Although not etymologically related to "park," the term "paradise" can also mean an enclosed garden, obviously in reference to the biblical first home of humankind.[4] Together, these definitions establish the park's key features: outdoor areas with some kind of perimeter, often subject to pastoralizing idealization, and, centrally for this article, an implied duration. In each case, the "park" establishes a physical boundary to form a newly articulated space, set off from its surroundings for various purposes, including leisure, safekeeping, cultivation, or some combination thereof. To park a park is to endow a

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previously generalized zone with intentional futurity, setting the stage for a variety of activities.

Defined by degrees of enclosure and access, sculpture parks are both permeable to the surrounding environment and set apart from it, and in this sense, their histories overlap in the understudied interstices between Land and public art.[5] Conventional wisdom privileges permanence as the utmost signifier of an object's historical significance, but the outdoor, and sometimes transient, nature of sculpture parks exposes the works placed in them to factors that impact the possibility of permanence in ways that have little to do with an artist's creative vision or the strength and importance of their work. At the intersection of "park" as a noun and a verb, this article explores episodes in a history of sculpture parks that engage questions of time and institutional stewardship. I seek to demonstrate that site specificity is also temporally specific, meaning that permanence is itself a paradox. Therefore, it is necessary to develop critical research and rhetorical methods that bridge the binary of extant and destroyed, enabling us to historicize permanent projects alongside those that can only be accessed in the archive, a zone of preservation and futurity for materials sometimes called "ephemera."

Embracing this paradox is not to valorize ephemerality over permanence or vice versa, but to expose implicit assumptions of value and related social hierarchies that mete out the twinned privileges of permanence and visibility. While permanently installed works are readily visible in the physical world, temporary ones require more of a viewer, who might rely on evidence like photographs, descriptions, maps, and other mnemonic tools. In what follows, I think expansively about the form of the sculpture park and its relationship to temporality through a sample of works from my own research experience. In each case, these are sites that themselves have been devoted to an ideal of public access while also sustaining dynamics of stasis and change just as much as the art placed there. Attending to permanence's paradox, I contend, requires an expanded definition of what it means to last: among shifting values, sites, archives, and an unpredictable future of the planet are multiple possibilities for tracking diachronic interactions among sculpture, institutions, and their environments. Permanence, like everything else in nature, is relative, and its forms are many.

OUT WEST

Insistently refusing the labels "minimalist" and "sculptor" throughout his career, the artist Donald Judd considered his work to be concerned primarily

with space.[6] After establishing a studio and residence in a five-story cast-iron building in SoHo in 1968, Judd began to desire even more space to realize his artistic vision, and he established a new base of operations in Marfa, Texas, by the mid-1970s.[7] In the broad expanses of West Texas, Judd followed his interest in space to every possible scale, from installation and architecture to ecology, land stewardship, and even astronomy.[8] I first began to think about the paradox of permanence when I worked as a guide and researcher in Marfa between 2012 and 2018, first at the Chinati Foundation (La Fundación Chinati) and then at Judd Foundation, two organizations dedicated to Judd's legacy.[9] Although distinct in their leadership, structure, and mission, both foundations share Judd's philosophy of permanent installation as a core principle, which he articulated succinctly in a widely quoted 1987 statement:

> It takes a great deal of time and thought to install work carefully. This should not always be thrown away. Most art is fragile and some should be placed and never moved again. … Somewhere a portion of contemporary art has to exist as an example of what the art and its context were meant to be. Somewhere, just as the platinum-iridium meter guarantees the tape measure, a strict measure must exist for the art of this time and place.[10]

Driven by the belief that careful placement should justify a work of art's protection from "conquest" by the constant turnover of the market, museum, and gallery, Judd's philosophy of permanent installation emphasized relationships between art, history, and place.[11] "The art and architecture of the past that we know," he writes, "is that which remains. The best is that which remains where it was painted, placed, or built."[12] To concretize (pun intended) his own position in history, Judd created institutional envelopes of permanence for the specific dialogues he established among art, architecture, and the surrounding landscapes. "I have a complex," wrote Judd in 1985,

> on a city block in Marfa, Texas, because I wanted to be in the Southwest of the United States and be near Mexico and also to have room for large permanent installations of my work as well as room to install work by other artists. The idea of large permanent installations, which I consider my idea, began in a loft on Nineteenth Street in New York and developed in a building I purchased in the city in 1968.[13]

Although they are not quite sculpture parks in the traditional sense, the spaces in Marfa tied to Judd's legacy involve outdoor sculptures in exquisite dialogue with an enchanting, even mythic, desert environment.[14]

It is notable that, as he put down roots and developed these ideas in Texas, Judd also participated prolifically in the sculpture park boom of the

1970s and 1980s: he contributed works to Western Washington University's renowned outdoor sculpture collection (1982) and Laumeier Sculpture Park (1984), among others.[15] In 1971, Judd began a body of work sometimes referred to as topographic, consisting of various configurations of "two concentric walls … [with] the outer one level and the inner one parallel to the slope of the land."[16] He justified the resulting asymmetry—unusual for an artist so recognized for his modular, serial work—as "reasonable" by virtue of its relationship to the site. In such projects, he wrote, "the two walls and two areas, one sloped and the other level, make a work, I suppose both art and architecture, although usually the distinction is important."[17] Subtly marking the relationship between an existing incline and a level surface adjusted to accommodate that incline, Judd's topographic works deliver on his claim to spatial artistic concerns. In their presence, one might extrapolate a localized interaction between natural and constructed geometries to those felt everywhere in our built environment, often below the threshold of consciousness. Metaphorically, one might understand the tension between level and incline to relate to an omnipresent dialectic of constancy and change, a central thesis of Judd's art, which when seen in this way, can hardly be described as "minimal."[18]

In 1977, Judd began a unique work operating on this topographic principle at his residence in Marfa, the complex he dubbed *La Mansana de Chinati* (The Block) (Fig. 1). The Block, so named for the city unit it encompasses, had been the home of Fort D.A. Russell's Quartermaster's Depot, located near the railroad tracks and a feed mill. Between 1973 and 1974, Judd had acquired the Block's two hangar buildings, the 1930s quartermaster's house, and quite a bit of open space.[19] To turn the whole compound into architecture, he first decided to enclose (park) the perimeter. He hired workers from Mexico—legally, he was careful to point out—to build the wall, first repurposing adobe bricks from fallen structures elsewhere in town, and then digging to make bricks on-site.[20] For all of Judd's intention to revive a construction technique indigenous to the region, his builders used cement, rather than mud-based mortar, to lay the adobe bricks. The cement mortar enabled the builders to work more quickly, but they did not foresee that adobe and cement expand and contract unevenly in moist conditions, contributing to the cumulative, and now pervasive, erosion of the bricks' exposed surfaces.[21] Since the walls were completed in 1985 (a mere drop in the bucket of eternity), powerful high desert winds, late summer monsoons, and the ever-blazing Texas sun have chiseled away at the material. The result is beautiful: lacy loops of mortar border depressions of varying depth where the adobe once laid flush. Pebbles, straw, and other inclusions in the pinkish-tan earthen admixture peek through the bricks' rough surfaces.[22]

Figure 1. Donald Judd, untitled, Marfa, Texas, 1977–85. Adobe bricks and cement; outer wall: 108 to 120 in. × 3160 × 3160 in. (12 in. thick), inner wall: 96 × 864 × 1440 in. (12 in. thick). La Mansana de Chinati/The Block, Judd Foundation, Marfa, Texas. Photo Alex Marks © Judd Foundation. Donald Judd Art © Judd Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

The walls are also endangered. If touched, which is obviously discouraged, these bricks easily yield bits of dust to a curious finger. Marfa visitors and residents in the later 2010s and early 2020s may have noticed a wooden brace, and later major construction, undertaken to stabilize a particularly compromised section of the outermost wall on the compound's southwestern edge, which was threatening to collapse into the neighboring arroyo.[23] Architects, conservators, engineers, and grounds specialists labor heroically to protect the Block against the vagaries of time and decay. The untitled adobe work—functionally marking inner and outer boundaries of Judd's mini-park—has reopened to the public following long closures, first due to the pandemic and then significant repairs and improvements. This is just one example among many that make up the *Gesamkunstwerk* of Judd's spaces in Marfa: similar tensions between conservation and permanence constantly loom over walls constructed in the manner of those at the Block at Chinati's John Chamberlain building and the Locker Plant, as well as objects in other materials, like the one hundred works in mill aluminum and the fifteen outdoor works in concrete.[24]

Shared belief—in the value of the art and its setting, the ideas behind it, and the inspiration they can collectively offer—drives the considerable expenditure required for the preservation of these works. Access is another priority: as much as Judd guarded his privacy during his lifetime, he was clear that he wanted others to experience what he had created.[25] Judd left New York (although maintained his residence there) because he found the conditions inadequate for what he wanted to build. However, other artists—Judd's neighbors, even, in lower Manhattan—who shared his interests in art, space, architecture, and land, found opportunities to create equally important work in parked settings, owing in part to the fact that permanence was not on their list of requirements.

BACK EAST

"Two of the most instructive places for viewing large outdoor sculpture on the East Coast are Artpark, in upstate New York, and Art on the Beach, in Lower Manhattan," wrote Tom Finkelpearl, himself an artist, in *Images and Issues* in the winter of 1982. "They have received attention primarily as forums where lesser-known artists can create large-scale sculptures in vast, open spaces."[26] I encountered this quotation in a photocopied clipping in the archives of the public art organization Creative Time while working as a researcher for the exhibition *Groundswell: Women of Land Art* at the Nasher Sculpture Center, in Dallas, Texas. The exhibition and accompanying catalog document a sample of projects by U.S.-based women artists created between 1968 and 1990 that were largely site-specific, spatially extended, and in many cases are no longer extant, making their illustration and display a complex matter. Ultimately the exhibition, conceived and curated by Leigh A. Arnold, contained sculptures; outdoor installations; still and moving images creatively displayed in projection, prints, and large-scale photo murals; drawings and sketchbooks; maquettes; and sound works. Below, I discuss projects by four of the twelve artists in the exhibition at two sites with "park" in their names.[27] In their embrace of impermanence as a horizon of possibility, these artists, sites, and works are essential not only to a history of Land art by women, but also to that of the sculpture park in the United States. Against their erasure, *Groundswell* enabled these projects to share space for a few months in the galleries of the Nasher and in the pages of the catalog, completing another circuit in the loop between ephemerality and permanence and exposing new audiences to what Arnold has rightly characterized as these artists' "radical, unique, and often frighteningly prescient works of art."[28]

Earl W. Brydges State Park is a 154-acre New York State Park located near the town of Lewiston, New York, along the Niagara River Gorge on the U.S. side of the border with Canada. It is also known as Artpark, which in its initial phase between 1974 and 1991 featured musical and theatrical performances, crafts, cooking demonstrations, and a unique visual arts residency program that brought hundreds of artists to Western New York and provided them a stipend for living expenses and materials under the condition that whatever they built would be broken down and removed at summer's end.[29] In its early days, the visual arts program was piloted by Dale McConathy, a friend of Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson. Building on those artists' ideas about the possibilities of earthwork as land reclamation, the first visual arts program cohort arrived the summer after Smithson's tragic death in Amarillo, Texas, and McConathy dedicated that year's season to his memory.[30] Resident artists, who were refreshingly gender-balanced and racially diverse for the period, were required to be on-site for a certain amount of time every day to interact with visitors. Artpark's diverse programming, populist agenda, and wide promotional reach made it popular right away, clocking in 15,000 visitors *per week* in its first full season, summer 1975.[31] In her article "A is for Artpark," the critic and curator Lucy Lippard called the place an "often marvelous madhouse. … [F]ruit of an awkward but expedient marriage between the arts and state patronage" and "a first in the area of artist-public interaction."[32]

Located on "One of North America's Most Historic Square Miles," Artpark's site has a fascinating history.[33] The park is home to one of the oldest known archaeological sites in New York State, a Hopewell burial mound dating to around 150 CE; the area was likely inhabited by Indigenous peoples since at least a millennium before that.[34] Later, Lewiston served as a portage for travelers on the Niagara River wanting to avoid sending boats and cargo over the treacherous falls. In fact, the falls themselves had once thundered down the rocky cliffs within Artpark's boundaries; however, over 12,000 years, the water's pressure had pushed the falls seven miles south to their present location.[35] For her 1975 Artpark project, the artist Michelle Stuart marked the cascade's former site in her monumental drawing/installation *Niagara Gorge Path Relocated* (Fig. 2). Using just her hands to rub and press earth and rocks from the site into the length of a massive roll of muslin-backed paper, a material she had discovered in her early career as a cartographic draftsperson, Stuart created an enormous landscape drawing that was both abstract and indexical. The artist enlisted the help of other resident artists, assistants, and even Artpark visitors to lower and unroll the 460-foot scroll over the cliff toward the rushing water below. The installation eventually disintegrated, a stunning if fleeting superimposition of the brief and attenuated timescales of

Figure 2. Michelle Stuart, *Niagara Gorge Path Relocated*, Artpark, Lewiston, New York, 1975. Rocks, earth (red iron oxide) from site, on muslin-backed rag paper; 460 × 5.2 ft. Photograph by Michelle Stuart. Courtesy of the artist.

earth, water, erosion, paper, and human touch. Stuart would use this method at many other sites throughout the 1970s, creating bodies of work including scrolls, books, ledgers, and other earth-encrusted paper forms that erode boundaries among drawing, sculpture, and installation.[36] Her extensive experimentation with earth and paper showcases the chromatic variation and historical information she found in overlapping strata of human and geologic histories. The siting of *Niagara Gorge Path Relocated* underscores the fact that even Niagara Falls, one of the continent's great natural wonders, is itself permanently in flux, carving through the earth's crust under its own relentless pressure.

Elsewhere along the gorge that season, artist Jody Pinto created a project that leveraged the paradox of permanence in a poetic collaboration with the weather. Before her Artpark residency, Pinto had begun to establish a reputation for large, skin-like works in resin and paper, mysterious watercolors and drawings, and sculptures made of poles and bundles resembling huts, birds' nests, and body parts. For her project at Artpark, she referenced the form of the travois, one of the most ancient methods for transporting cargo in the

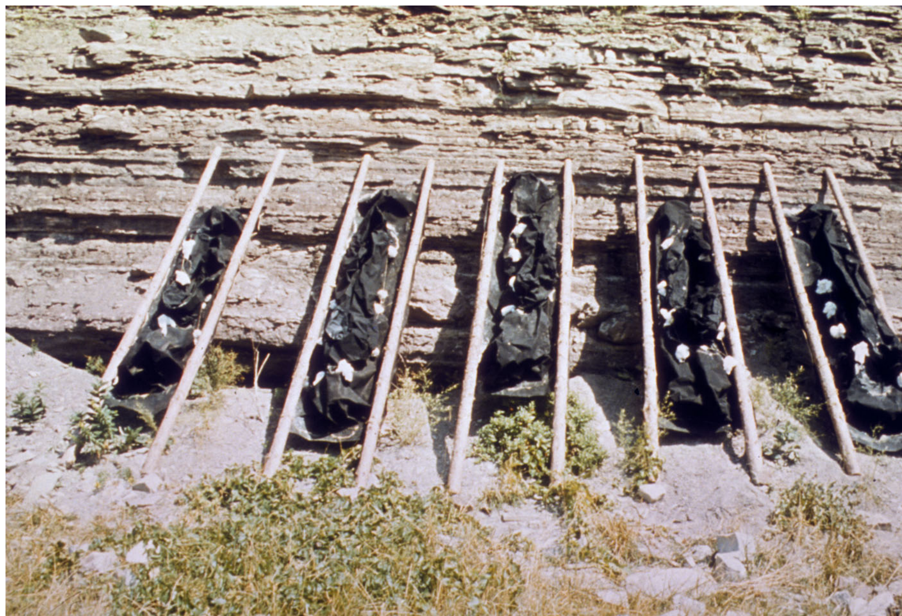

Figure 3. Jody Pinto, *Five Black Ovals*, Artpark, Lewiston, New York, 1975. Ten wood poles, resin-coated paper, hay, chicken wire, cotton, jute; 13–18 × 4 × 3 ft. Photograph by Jody Pinto. Courtesy of the artist.

Americas. An ancestor to the modern hospital stretcher, the travois is an invention believed to be even older than the wheel.[37] For her first installation, *Five Black Ovals,* Pinto planned to drive ten twenty-foot-long poles weighing 120 pounds each into the ground. Finding it was impossible to sink the poles into the rocky earth, Pinto decided instead to lean them against the stone wall of the gorge, establishing a relationship of mutual support between the installation and its environment (Fig. 3). Between five pairs of poles, Pinto suspended soft, sculptural pockets of paper coated in black-pigmented resin that resembled the husks of giant hatched cocoons. The artist has likened their shape to shark's egg casings, objects known colloquially as a mermaid's or devil's purse, which she encountered on the shores of New Jersey growing up.[38] Each oval, filled with hay and chicken wire, had an opening at its center adorned with a fuzzy cotton "necklace." The artist intended to suggest "woman's body–experience," as well as for birds to nest within. As much as the dark, stretcher-like forms of the *Black Ovals* might have reminded a viewer in 1975 of casualties of the war in Vietnam, they also intentionally evoked the cyclical, gestational temporalities of nest and womb.

Ten days later, disaster struck. A storm wiped out Pinto's hard work. Indulging briefly in her frustration, the artist decided to "turn anger positive

Figure 4. Jody Pinto, *Bleed Pockets*, Artpark, Lewiston, New York, 1975. Twenty-four wood poles, red clay, hay, canvas, and jute; 12–16 × 4 × 3 ft. Photograph by Jody Pinto. Courtesy of the artist.

and begin again." Reusing the supports for the first piece, she added fourteen additional poles, for a total of twenty-four, which could in turn accommodate twelve new bundle-like sculptures, one for each moon cycle in a year. She retitled the work *Bleed Pockets,* replacing the former paper ovals with white canvas parcels "3' wide, 12–16' long, 1 ½' deep" (Fig. 4). Leaving the chicken wire and cotton behind, Pinto stuffed these new sculptures with hay and deposits of red earth from the site. Before long, the rains came again, bringing the new work bleeding into life (Fig. 5). As the artist summarized it in an accompanying statement: "storm destroyed 5 Black Ovals/storm completed 12 Bleed Pockets."[39]

The following year, for her Artpark residency, Mary Miss made *Blind Set* (1976), a series of four concentric steel rings of increasing depth, separated by bands of gravel and crossed by shallow troughs, 140 feet across, at ninety-degree angles. She intended the piece to function as a set for a short film (*Blind,* 1977), as well as for visitors to enter and experience it in person. From its center, eight feet deep, one would be able to see only the sky. "Rising slowly," the artist wrote, "by scaling the successive rings, you pass the … bands of steel, as though coming up through layers (strata) of the earth—like rising out of the center of a crater."[40] Seen from the air, *Blind Set* looked like a cross-hairs or target. Its title refers to a baitless trap strategically placed along an

Figure 5. Jody Pinto, detail of *Bleed Pockets*, Artpark, Lewiston, New York, 1975. Photograph by Jody Pinto. Courtesy of the artist.

animal's habitual path. Positioning her structure as an "operational link between the camera and the landscape," Miss captured both visitors and time in *Blind Set*. Using rock and steel to construct a space that would endure in filmic form, she created what art historian Sarah Hamill has described as a "decoy in a plausible world."[41]

For her installation at Artpark the following summer, 1977, Alice Aycock chose a site known as the "Spoils Pile," so named because it was made up of slag (later discovered to be highly toxic) that had been excavated to construct Lewiston's Robert Moses Niagara Hydroelectric Power Station.[42] Aycock's *Project Entitled "The Beginnings of a Complex. . ." Excerpt Shaft #4 / Five Walls* (Fig. 6) was a partial realization of a much larger "complex" she outlined in a related artist book and drawings, as well as an installation she built the same summer for Documenta 6, in Kassel, Germany.[43] Engaging both the

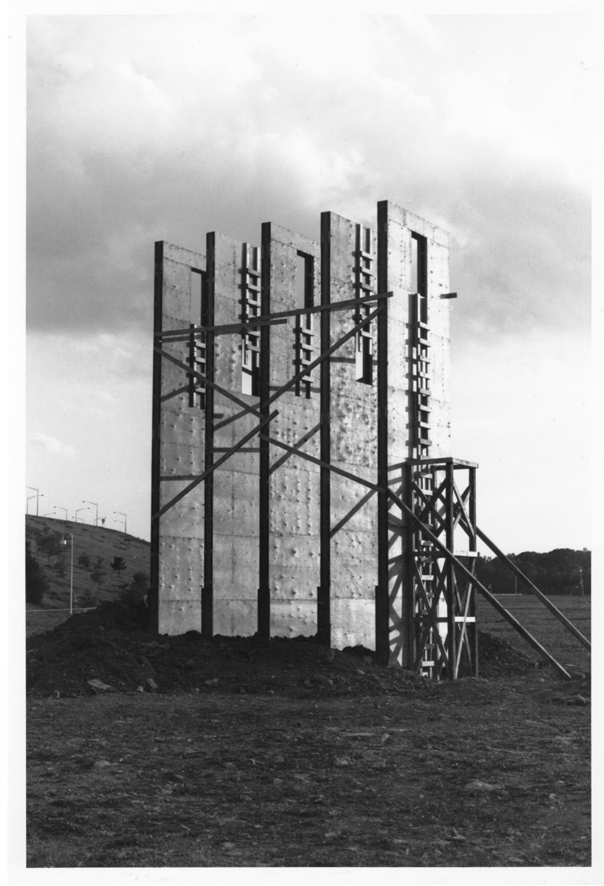

Figure 6. Alice Aycock, *Project Entitled "The Beginnings of a Complex . . ." Excerpt Shaft #4 / Five Walls*, Artpark, Lewiston, New York, 1977. Wood; 28 × 8 × 6 ft. Destroyed. Photograph by Alice Aycock. Courtesy of the artist.

psychological and architectural valences of the term "complex," Aycock's *Project Entitled "The Beginnings of a Complex…"* references the false fronts of buildings found on movie sets, in ghost towns and amusement parks; ancient necropoli; military bunkers; and the vernacular architecture of the shantytown. Although Aycock's *Beginnings of a Complex* was more elaborate than Miss's *Blind Set,* both works had one foot in real space and one in the realm of the architectural folly or theatrical set, as if anticipating their own provisional existence. Aycock's concept of the "complex" was a structure that

> exists in the world as a thing in itself, generating the conditions of its own becoming, and which exists apart from the world as a model for it, exposing the conditions of its own artifice, a complex which undercuts its own logic by exposing the premise on which it was built,

Figure 7. Alice Aycock, *The Large-Scale Dis/Integration of Microelectronic Memories (a Newly Revised Shanty Town)*, Battery Park landfill, 1980. Wood and used doors; ramp: 75 × 105 ft.; five walls of doors: 8 × 12 ft.; carousel: 14 × 15 × 30 ft. In *Art on the Beach #2*, organized by Creative Time, New York City. Photograph by Alice Aycock. Courtesy of the artist.

> undermining and underpinning, drawing in and then distancing the spectator from the work in a theatre of theatre which is both true and false.[44]

ON THE WATER

Aycock had another chance at the complex as "a model for a city on the scale of an actual city" at the Battery Park City landfill, as part of Creative Time's *Art on the Beach #2* in 1980, organized by Nancy Princenthal.[45] *Art on the Beach* had a run of seven seasons between 1978 and 1985 as a temporary sculpture park that one critic referred to as "A Sculpture Garden By the Sea," despite the fact the manmade beach near Manhattan's southern tip faced not the ocean but the confluence of the Hudson and East rivers.[46] *Art on the Beach* capitalized on something otherwise unheard of in the bustling and financially strained city: a sandy, "barren landscape" in which "works stood

alone like remnants of a lost civilization."[47] Creative Time, like Artpark and a number of organizations established in the 1970s, such as the Institute for Art and Urban Resources and the Public Art Fund, among others, participated in the broader trend of artists' "reclamation" of underutilized, dilapidated, or left-over spaces in New York's postindustrial landscapes. The Battery Park landfill, which the Battery Park City Authority lent to Creative Time for *Art on the Beach*, extends the island of Manhattan with over three million cubic yards of earth and rock excavated during the construction of the Twin Towers, the New York City Water Tunnel, and other public works. The sand that earned *Art on the Beach* its name was dredged from the New York harbor off Staten Island. Under Nelson Rockefeller in the late 1960s, the area was slated for the development of housing, light industry, and public green space, but it suffered from years of delays due to the city's financial crisis. In the meantime, art flooded in.[48]

Housing construction at Battery Park City began in 1980, the same year Aycock created *The Large-Scale Dis/Integration of Micro-electronic Memories (A Newly Revised Shantytown)* (Fig. 7) for *Art on the Beach #2*. A huge, complicated installation, *The Large-Scale Dis/Integration* consisted of three main parts: an elevated platform with ramps and a labyrinthine series of passages, a leaning semicircular carousel-esque structure, and a row of five rough walls, lower than but not unlike those that made up her installation at Artpark. This time, however, Aycock chose to punctuate the walls with doors she had gathered from apartment buildings then under demolition on the Lower East Side.[49] As the title suggests, the work concerns the subject of memory, particularly how it shapes and is shaped by urban experience. Aycock modeled the sprawling complex on Tantric diagrams of the universe (a steady source of inspiration for the artist) as well as renderings of microelectronic circuitry.[50] She conceived both *The Large-Scale Dis/Integration* and a related series of drawings titled *The First City of the Dead: The City of Doors* as a kind of memory palace for an old woman with rows of doors, each one a portal to the memories from a single year of her life.[51] *The Large-Scale Dis/Integration* models, in maximal miniature, both city and memory in a constant state of simultaneous construction and deconstruction. Left to weather the elements for the following two years, the work functioned as a stage of another type, for various dance and musical performances, as well as other, subsequent iterations of *Art on the Beach*.[52] Eventually, due to condition and safety issues, the work was bulldozed and the wood burned to make way for subsequent art projects.[53] Later still, the "beach" itself became the substrate for the high-end housing, retail, and waterfront park found there today.

Although many artists worked at Battery Park landfill, Miss has the distinction of creating one of the earliest temporary installations there, and, about

a decade later, a permanent work on almost the exact same spot. In 1973, before Creative Time was commissioning art on the Battery, Miss noticed a “strange moonscape” on one of her walks through the neighborhood, and she was inspired to build something there. Miss was at the time developing a reputation for spatially diffuse, site-specific sculpture that had to be walked through to be experienced. She had previously worked on a waterfront for *Ropes/Shore* (1969), a series of ropes tied to stakes placed at twenty-foot intervals she had pushed over the water’s edge. Visually stitching together land and water, *Ropes/Shore* is an early example of Miss’s subtle sculptural interventions on a viewer’s awareness of their environment through an accumulation of sensory information over time and distance.

Four years later, with a modest New York State Council of the Arts grant, permission from the Battery Park City Authority, and the help of a friend, Miss constructed *Battery Park Landfill,* a series of five billboard-like structures, marked with a circular cutout, placed at intervals of fifty feet (Fig. 8). In each successive structure, the circle gradually descended, like a series of freeze-frames of the setting sun. When viewed head on, the circles aligned to multiply

Figure 8. Mary Miss, *Battery Park Landfill*, Battery Park City, New York, 1973. Wood; 5.5 × 12 × 250 ft, approx. Photograph by Mary Miss. Courtesy of the artist.

the horizon, as they did in *Blind Set*. From the side, the work all but disappeared. Lippard again, with an eyewitness account:

> The piece happens when you get there and stand in front of it. Its identity changes abruptly. You look through a series of descending cutout circles, the first one set so high in the solidly boarded wall that only a line separates it from the sky, the last one only a shallow arc left above ground. The experience is telescopic. As the modestly sized holes (and the adjacent walls that these holes incorporate into your vision) are perceived, they expand into an immense *interior* space, like a hall of mirrors or a column of air descending into the ground. You are standing outdoors; you have approached something which appears flimsy and small in its vast surroundings, and now you are inside of it, drawn into its central focus, your perspective aggrandizing magically. The plank fences, only false facades nailed to supporting posts on the back, become what they are—not the sculpture but the vehicle for the experience of the sculpture, which in fact exists in thin air, or rather in distance crystallized.[54]

In her article, Lippard bemoaned the fact that the work's subtlety, temporary nature, and out-of-the-way location would prevent many from seeing it, at least in person. Miss's *Battery Park Landfill* stood for one month.

A decade later, the committee that selected Miss for a commission for the Battery Park City Esplanade, by then with development in full swing, was unaware of the artist's 1973 installation.[55] This new project was part of the Battery Park City Authority's broader public art program, which continues today, even as the park undergoes changes to plan for rising sea levels and the increased incidence of extreme weather events caused by climate change. Between 1984 and 1987, in collaboration with architects Susan Child and Stanton Esckstut, Miss realized *South Cove,* a project hailed as one of the most important public artworks in the country (Fig. 9). Carefully planned plantings, walkways, pilings, platforms, and lighting offer parkgoers panoramic views of the river and several points of visual and visceral access to the waterfront: at *South Cove,* you can hear and smell the water, and if you wanted to, you could even get wet. From the two-story, crownlike expanded metal viewing platform to a curving pier/loggia that disappears into the water, the entire structure invites a visitor to feel the water's presence through a revolving sense of perspective. As of this writing, *South Cove* is safe, but the Battery Park City Resiliency Project is currently weighing options to increase the park's elevation in anticipation of future weather catastrophes, which would significantly impact Miss's piece. The city has solicited feedback from the community and

Figure 9. Mary Miss, *South Cove*, Battery Park City, New York, 1984–87. Earth, wood, concrete, steel, and water; overall site 3.5 acres. Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority, New York collaboration with Susan Child, landscape architect, and Stanton Eckstut, architect. Photograph by Mary Miss. Courtesy of the artist.

other stakeholders on its plans to modify Battery Park, but the future of *South Cove* is somewhat uncertain.[56]

THE PLATINUM-IRIDIUM METER

"Somewhere," wrote Judd, "just as the platinum-iridium meter guarantees the tape measure, a strict measure must exist for the art of this time and place."[57] When he wrote these words in 1987, as *South Cove* reached completion on the other side of the country, the platinum-iridium meter was still the standard. In 2019, however, a coalition of scientists in sixty countries agreed to roll out a new set of mathematical constants, meaning that the objects standardizing units of measurement since the nineteenth century, like the platinum-iridium meter and the platinum-alloy cylinder that guaranteed the mass of a kilogram, have entered new phases of life as artifacts of historically contingent knowledge systems.[58] *Everything* changes.

Based on the examples I have offered here, it might be tempting to draw conclusions based on gender. I opened with a discussion of a male artist so committed to permanence that he started his own museum devoted to it. Of

the thirteen artists who contributed permanent installations to the Chinati Foundation, just two were women: Roni Horn and Coosje van Bruggen.[59] Then, I focused on works by four female artists who used ephemerality to their artistic advantage in their early careers. However, since they made the important early works discussed here, Aycock, Miss, Stuart, and Pinto have all gone on to create numerous permanent installations around the world that, like Judd's projects in Marfa, unveil rich intersections of art, architecture, land, and the embodied position of viewers who see and experience them today.[60] Meanwhile, although Judd fiercely defended his spaces in Texas and New York, other installations he intended to be permanent, in Switzerland and Italy, have not survived.[61] It would therefore be too simplistic to conclude that female artists are more likely to work ephemerally than male ones, or that male artists care more about permanence. The paradox of permanence is not itself gendered, but to quote Judd's statement for the Chinati Foundation again, "The art and architecture of the past that we know is that which remains."[62]

I am arguing that the terms of "what we know" and "that which remains" are fundamentally unstable, on timescales as short as a roll of paper and long as the journey of Niagara Falls. Writing a history of Land art by women, we found when researching *Groundswell,* would have been impossible if we were limited to what remains, at least where it was built. Where these works do remain is in books and archives—discoverable, even if sometimes hard to find. Our research for *Groundswell* not only uncovered such works but revealed how the proliferation of public art programs, percent-for-art commissions, and sculpture parks in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with hard-won victories of the civil rights and women's movements to increase opportunities and access to resources, if not full gender or racial parity, for women artists and artists of color to create large-scale artworks in public settings.[63] We also encountered scholarship detailing major contributions by female art workers, curators, and cultural brokers to histories of art outdoors, in parks and public spaces, even if the artists they supported sometimes skewed male: Anita Contini, Doris C. Freedman, Alanna Heiss, Lucy R. Lippard, Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz, Suzanne Randolph, Margot Wellington, and many others.[64] By centering contributions by women and placing extant and "destroyed" installations together in their rightful contemporaneity, *Groundswell* and this article work toward closing the visibility gap between "what we know" and "that which remains."

I maintain that, by thinking all outdoor sculpture on a flexible spectrum of ephemerality—acknowledging permanence's paradox—we can begin to chart a path toward balancing the scales of representation in overlapping histories of Land art, public art, and sculpture parks. I selected the environmental installations discussed here because they open onto institutional histories of sculpture

parks with unique and instructive relationships to permanence and ephemerality. More than this, each also formally echoes the sculpture park's defining skeleton of enclosure as well its membranes of permeability—to the elements, sky, time, history, and broad and shifting publics. In a 1989 article on "Temporality and Public Art," the scholar Patricia C. Phillips writes,

> Immutability is valued by society. There is a desire for a steadfast art that expresses permanence through its own perpetualness. Simultaneously, society has a conflicting predilection for an art that is contemporary and timely, that responds to and reflects its temporal and circumstantial context. And then there is a self-contradicting longing that this fresh spontaneity be protected, made invulnerable to time, in order to assume its place as historical artifact and as concrete evidence of a period's passions and priorities.[65]

Projecting backward in time and forward into the future, the paradox of permanence requires rubrics under which permanence and ephemerality can speak to one another and be mutually, reciprocally informed, enabling art historians to generate a more complete and inclusive history of sculpture, "parked."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Alice Aycock, Mary Miss, Jody Pinto, and Michelle Stuart for generously sharing their ideas and images, and for their friendship; the Nasher Sculpture Center and Leigh Arnold for the opportunity to assist in realizing *Groundswell: Women of Land Art*; archivists, particularly Allison Chomet, at New York University's Fales Library, and Heather Gring, at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo; Judd Foundation, for nurturing me intellectually, professionally, and personally in Marfa and New York; and to those that read drafts of this article and offered valuable feedback: Francesca Balboni, Ann Reynolds, Marin R. Sullivan, Claire Taggart, and the anonymous reviewers.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

NOTES

[1] Harper Douglas, "Etymology of Park," Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed Jul. 13, 2023, https://www.etymonline.com/word/park.

[2] "park, n.," Mar. 2023, OED Online, accessed Jun. 25, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/park_n?tab=meaning_and_use. Oxford University Press.

[3] "park, v.," Mar. 2023, OED Online, accessed Jun. 25, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/park_v?tab=meaning_and_use#31984286. Oxford University Press.

[4] "paradise, n.," Mar. 2023, OED Online, accessed Jul. 13, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/paradise_n?tab=meaning_and_use#31855744. Oxford University Press.

[5] Leigh Arnold, Scout Hutchinson, Jana La Brasca, Anna Lovatt, Jenni Sorkin, and Anne Thompson, *Groundswell: Women of Land Art* (Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Center and Delmonico Books, 2023), which bridges histories of land and public art that are often separated in the literature. One major Land art survey, Miwon Kwon and Philipp Kaiser's *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974* (Munich: Prestel, 2012), closes with Land art's "institutionalization" in 1974. However, Kwon's earlier *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002) links the two discourses. Curator and public art consultant Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz articulates links between Land and public art in her entry "Public Art" in the *Encyclopedia of Architecture: Design, Engineering, and Construction*, ed. Joseph A. Wilkes, Vol. 4 (New York: The American Institute of Architects, 1989). See also Harriet Senie, *Contemporary Public Sculpture: Tradition, Transformation, and Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[6] Judd even claimed, late in life, to be the inventor of installation art: "In its invention an idea is clear and in its diffusion it is vague. … A new idea is quickly debased, often before the originator has time and money to continue it. In general I think this has happened to all of my work, but especially to the use of the whole room, which is now called an installation, which basically I began." Donald Judd, "Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular," 1993. In *Donald Judd Writings,* edited by Caitlin Murray and Flavin Judd (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2016), 839.

[7] Judd Foundation, "Donald Judd Chronology," last modified Nov. 2022.
https://juddfoundation.org/chronology.

[8] In his 1983 essay "Art and Architecture," Judd wrote, "My work has the appearance it has, wrongly called 'objective' and 'impersonal,' because my first and largest interest is in my relation to the natural world, all of it, all the way out." In *Donald Judd Writings,* 347. See "Donald Judd Chronology" for details on Judd's efforts toward land conservation, his philanthropic support of the McDonald Observatory in Fort Davis, Texas, and his participation in protesting the creation of a nuclear waste dump near Fort Hancock, Texas.

[9] The Chinati Foundation is a contemporary art museum established by Donald Judd during his lifetime, and it maintains permanent installations as well as a temporary exhibition program. Meanwhile, Judd Foundation is the artist's estate and is dedicated to preserving Judd's living and working spaces in Marfa and New York, supporting research, and other activities, including the Donald Judd catalogue raisonné, to which I contributed as a research fellow from 2016 to 2018.

[10] Donald Judd, "Statement for the Chinati Foundation," in *Donald Judd Writings,* 486.

[11] I borrow the word "conquest" from these lines in "Statement for the Chinati Foundation": "Almost all recent art is conquered as soon as it's made, since it's first shown for sale and once sold is exhibited as foreign in the alien museums. The public has no idea of art other than that it is something portable that can be bought. There is no constructive effort; there is no cooperative effort." The irony here may be obvious, considering that Judd has been critiqued for reinscribing colonial patterns of westward expansion and land ownership; he purchased numerous buildings and thousands of acres of land in west Texas between the 1970s and 1990s. Judd also filled his summer and winter bedrooms at the Block with Indigenous art from the Southwest, Mexico, and South America, as well as the Pacific Northwest and Canada.

[12] See note 9.

[13] For further details on Judd's building in New York, see https://juddfoundation.org/spaces/101-spring-street/ and *Donald Judd Spaces* (New York: Judd Foundation, 2023).

[14] By the time Judd arrived in the 1970s, Marfa was already part of a romanticized cultural image of the Wild West. The 1954 desert epic *Giant,* starring Rock Hudson, James Dean, and Elizabeth Taylor, was shot on a ranch west of town, and the yet-unexplained celestial phenomenon of the Marfa Lights had been known for centuries throughout the region. For more on Marfa's history, see Lonn Taylor, *Marfa for the Perplexed* (Marfa, TX: Marfa Book Company, 2018).

[15] Judd's piece at Western Washington University was removed due to serious corrosion and reinstalled five years later at a new site on campus, approved by Judd Foundation, in 2019 (https://westerngallery.wwu.edu/donald-judd-untitled-1982). Judd also created outdoor works for Northern Kentucky University and the Kröller Müller Museum.
[16] Donald Judd, "Marfa, Texas" (1985), in *Donald Judd Writings*, p. 426. Other works with this "topographic" aspect include those created for the private estates of Philip Johnson (circular) and Joseph Pulitzer (rectangular), a piece (square) for Sonsbeek '71, a temporary exhibition in an eighteenth-century park in Arnhem, Holland, and an object (elliptical) at the Guggenheim, which took the principle to one of the ramps in Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic circular building. Judd first developed the idea of working with a level surface and natural incline for an unrealized, round architectural structure in Baja California, Mexico. See Judd Foundation, "Local History: Donald Judd and Baja," https://juddfoundation.org/research/local-history/local-history-donald-judd-baja-california-mexico/.
[17] Judd, "Marfa, Texas" (1985), in *Donald Judd Writings,* 430.
[18] See, for example, Judd's "Complaints: Part I," 1969, in *Donald Judd Writings,* 200–9.
[19] There are four of these prefabricated hangar structures in Marfa. The other two are now the Arena, at the Chinati Foundation, and the Capri, connected with the Hotel Thunderbird. See Marianne Stockebrand, Rob Weiner, and Rudi Fuchs, *Chinati: The Vision of Donald Judd*, (Marfa, TX and New Haven, CT: The Chinati Foundation in association with Yale University Press, 2010), and Urs Peter Flückiger, *Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, Texas,* 2nd ed. (Birkhäuser, 2021, originally published 2007).
[20] For recent preservation projects, the foundation used the earth displaced during the installation of underground drainage cisterns to create new adobe bricks and reconstruct the most compromised walls at the Block. Peter Stanley, Judd Foundation's director of operations and preservation, in conversation with the author, Jul. 13, 2023.
[21] Peter Stanley in conversation with the author, Jul. 13, 2023.
[22] The foundation is now in the process of establishing protocols for repairing the walls that acknowledge the sacrificial nature of the outermost adobe surface.
[23] The since-repaired collapsing wall borders the Block's winter garden, whose careful restoration was unveiled during Chinati Weekend 2023. The original bamboo grove has been replaced with a native garden and all original architectural elements have been restored. Turtles no longer live in the water feature.
[24] See Hilarie M. Sheets, "What Would Donald Judd Do?" *New York Times,* Aug. 12, 2022.
[25] See Donald Judd, "Judd Foundation" (1977), in *Donald Judd Writings,* 284–7.
[26] Tom Finkelpearl, "Andrea Blum and the Buchens at Artpark and Art on the Beach," *Images and Issues,* 3, no. 3 (1982); Creative time Archive; MSS 179; box 1; folder 38; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.
[27] Beverly Buchanan's work could easily have joined this discussion of sculpture, walls, and complex relationships to permanence, but she typically worked in outdoor spaces that are not sculpture parks, and therefore falls outside the scope of this special issue. For more on Buchanan, see Park McArthur and Jennifer Burris Staton, *Beverly Buchanan: 1978–1981* (Mexico City: Athénée Press, 2016); Amelia Groom, *Marsh Ruins* (London: Afterall Books, 2021); and Andy Campbell, "We're Going to See Blood on Them Next: Beverly Buchanan's Georgia Ruins and Black Negativity," *rhizomes* 29 (2016). doi.org/10.20415/rhiz/029.e05.
[28] Leigh A. Arnold, "Exceeding the Field of Vision," in *Groundswell: Women of Land Art* (Nasher Sculpture Center and Delmonico Books, 2023), 23.
[29] See Sandra Q. Firmin, "Have You Artparked?," in *Artpark: 1974–1984* (Buffalo: University at Buffalo Art Galleries, State University of New York, 2010).
[30] Firmin, "Have You Artparked?"
[31] Clipping from *The New Yorker,* Sep. 8, 1975, 26. Artpark Archival Collection A2013.107; Box 63, folder 1; Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, New York.
[32] Lucy R. Lippard, "A is for Artpark," *Art in America* 62, no. 6 (1974): 37–8.

[33] Artpark promotional material, c. 1982, Artpark Archival Collection A2013.107; Box 3, folder 3; Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, New York.
[34] See chronology in *Artpark: 1974–1984.*
[35] Sharon Edelman, ed., *Artpark: The Program in Visual Arts* (Lewiston, NY: Artpark, 1976), 124.
[36] For more on Stuart's work, see Anna Lovatt, ed., *Michelle Stuart: Drawn from Nature* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2013).
[37] René R. Gadacz, "Travois," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia,* Historica Canada. Article published Feb. 7, 2006; last edited Mar. 8, 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/travois#:~:text=The%20travois%20was%20a%20type,short%20distances%20using%20the %20travois.
[38] Jody Pinto in conversation with the author, summer 2022.
[39] Pinto in *Artpark: The Program in Visual Arts*, 98–9.
[40] Miss in *Artpark: The Program in Visual Arts,* 160–1.
[41] Sarah Hamill, "'The Skin of the Earth': Mary Miss's Untitled 1973/75 and the Politics of Precarity," *Oxford Art Journal* 41, no. 2 (2018): 276.
[42] This project was executed on land seized from the Tuscarora Nation through eminent domain. The construction of the dam was extremely unsafe—no fewer than twenty workers lost their lives on the operation. See "Niagara Falls: History of Power," http://www.niagarafrontier.com/power.html.
[43] Documenta 6 also included Walter de Maria's controversial *Vertical Earth Kilometer*, which remains buried in Kassel. Neither of Aycock's built realizations of the complex survive.
[44] Aycock, *Project Entitled "The Beginnings of a Complex …"* (New York: Lapp Princess Press, 1977), n.p.
[45] Aycock, *Project Entitled "The Beginnings of a Complex …"*, n.p.
[46] Marilyn Mizrahi, "A Sculpture Garden by the Sea," *The Villager,* Jul. 8, 1982, 9. Creative Time Archive; MSS 179; box 1; folder 38; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.
[47] Mizrahi, "A Sculpture Garden by the Sea."
[48] For more on the history of Creative Time, see Anne Pasternak and Ruth A. Peltason, eds., *Creative Time: The Book, 33 Years of Public Art in New York City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007) and Michelle H. Bogart, *Sculpture in Gotham* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018).
[49] The doors, which Aycock had taken with the help of assistants and a truck, did not last as long as the rest of the installation. Most were stolen not long after they were added to the installation, which was never completed. Alice Aycock in conversation with the author, Jun. 30, 2023.
[50] Robert Hobbs, *Alice Aycock: Sculpture and Projects* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 284–91.
[51] For further discussion of this work, see Christine Filippone, *Science, Technology, and Utopias: Women Artists and Cold War America* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
[52] Shortly before its destruction, *The Large Scale Dis/Integration* stood briefly next to Jody Pinto's *Widow's Perch,* which she created for Art on the Beach #4 in 1982. That season overlapped with Agnes Denes's iconic *Wheatfield—A Confrontation,* commissioned by the Public Art Fund, sited in a different section of the landfill.
[53] Slides documenting the destruction of Aycock's installation, Creative Time Archive; MSS 179; box 111; sleeves 3–13; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.
[54] Lucy R. Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," *Art in America* 62, no. 2 (1974): 76. Emphasis original.
[55] Mary Miss, email to the author, Jun. 28, 2023.
[56] Battery Park City Authority, "North/West Battery Park City Resliency Project," press release, 2023, https://bpca.ny.gov/nwbpcr/.
[57] See note 10.

[58] Emily Conover, "The Kilogram Just Got a Revamp. A Unit of Time Might Be Next," May 20, 2019, *Science News,* accessed July 13, 2023, https://www.sciencenews.org/article/kilogram-just-got-revamp-unit-time-might-be-next.
[59] Here I refer to *Monument to the Last Horse* (1991), by Claes Oldenburg and van Bruggen, and Horn's *Things That Happen Again* (1986–8). Emilia Kabakov also collaborated with her husband Ilya Kabokov on *School No. 6*, although she is not formally credited.
[60] Permanent projects by these artists are too numerous to list but notable examples by Aycock include *East River Roundabout,* in Manhattan (1995/2014), and installations at Washington-Dulles, JFK, and the Des Moines airports. Miss's major extant public works include *Field Rotation* (1981), in Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park, in Illinois; *South Cove* (1984–7); and an untitled work at the University of Washington, Seattle (1990). Since her first public commission for *Fingerspan* bridge (1987), Pinto has been involved with many landscape and public art projects, such as *Tree of Life/City Boundary* (1992) in Phoenix, Arizona, and *Land Buoy* (2014) in Philadephia. Stuart's permanent projects include *Stone Alignments/Solstice Cairns* (1979) in Oregon, as well as *Tabula* (1989–92) at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan. Miss's Greenwood Pond: Double Site at the Des Moines Art Center, commissioned with the promise of permanence in 1989, was slated for destruction in early 2024. This has provoked understandable public outrage and an outpouring of support from artists and art workers. For more on these efforts, see The Cultural Landscape Foundation. https://www.tclf.org/feature-type/greenwood-pond-double-site-letters-support.
[61] These are his projects at Eichholteren and his works purchased by Giuseppe Panza. See Donald Judd, "Una Stanza per Panza," *Donald Judd Writings,* 630–99.
[62] See note 6.
[63] Jenni Sorkin, "Structured Power," in *Groundswell: Women of Land Art,* 69–77.
[64] See Bogart, *Sculpture in Gotham.*
[65] Patricia C. Phillips, "Temporality and Public Art," *Art Journal* 48, no. 4 (1989): 331–5.

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