# Claims Department





# WorldCon is in 17 days as I write this.

It's in Chicago. Chicago is the American home of public art.

OK, there's a bit of over-sell there, but there is more world-class public art uin Chi-ville than any other American city. I've only experienced a little of it, and this trip will see me dgoing to see more, including The Bean, which I will take pictures of and use as postcards mostly to piss off Anish Kapoor.

In other news, the family is over COVID and generally OK. The kids are in second grade, and Vanessa is both working and doing art. She'll even be in the Art Show at ChiCon!

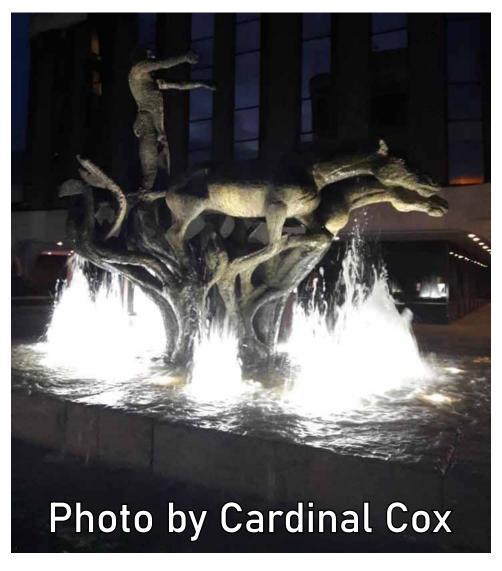
Work is work, and I've been enjoying the hell out of it. I love that I get to do the best part of the job at the Museum, putting together exhibits, with the added bonus of getting to do graphic design, article writing, and even video and audio editing. It's kinda the perfect job for me, and being an archivist is a jobtitle I never once expected to hold.

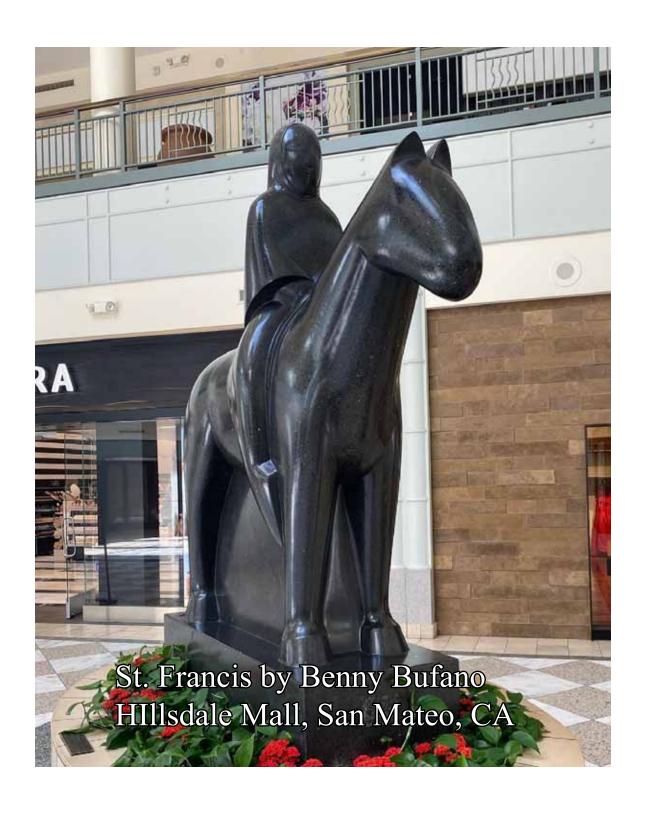
OK, a look at Public art from all over the place! Enjoy!

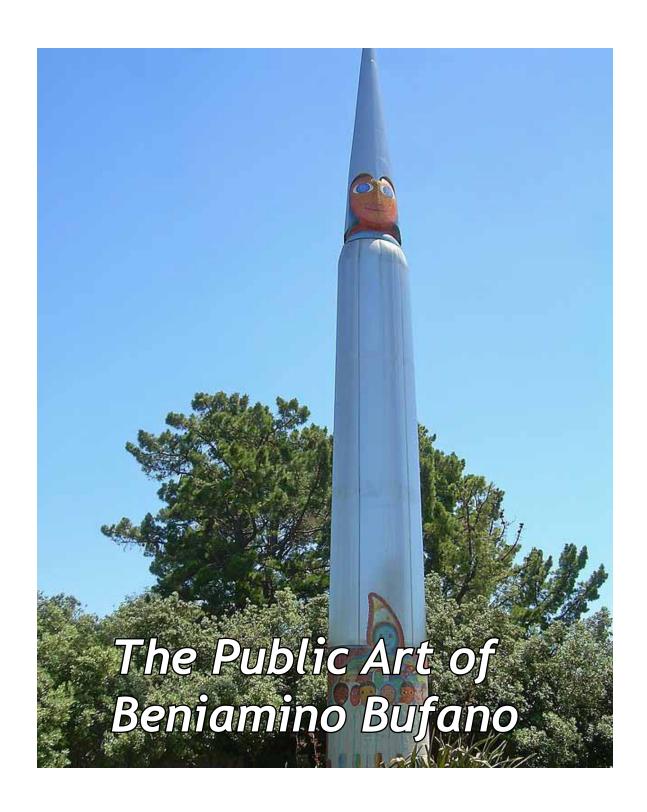
# Claims Department - August 2022

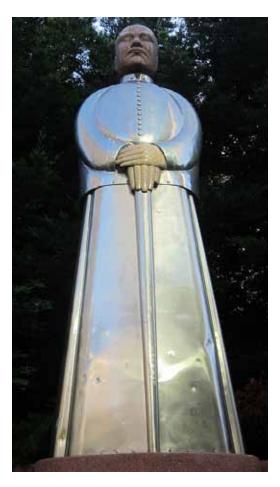
Chris Garcia wrote the pieces, with photos from James Bacon, Vanessa Applegate ,Cardinal Cox, Ric Bretschneider, David Bedno, R-Laurraine Tutihasi, Shutterstock, and Wikimedia's Public Domain images!

Cover is by James Bacon BaCover is by Ric Bretschneider









When I was a kid, I'd go to the grassy area around the Triton Museum of Art. I wouldn't go into the museum, that would wait, but I'd ride my bike around, hang out on the playground, and generally just enjoy the place.

And the giant spike that towered over City Hall.

That spike was *Universal Child* and the artist who created it was Beniamino Bufano, or Benny to his friends.

Same time, if not earlier, I would go to plays. Mostly musicals at the Center for the Performing Arts in Downtown San Jose. I used to love it because outside, there was a statue of a bear. It was a streamlined, abstract statue, and I used to climb all over it, and it took on the form in my mind of what a piece of public art should do. The piece was called *Brown Bear* and the artist was Beniamino Bufano, or Benny to his friends.

Maybe you've caught on to the trend.

Bufano was born in Italy, but came to the US when he was young. He went to the Art Students League of New York, found work with Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, but got fired, and

then worked with Paul Manship for a bit. He was a smart guy, had a bit of a resolute attitude, but really made his first big mark in 1915. There was a major contest around the theme "The Immigrant in America" and Bufano was one of those picked to have his work shown at The Whitney Studio Club, founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, of all people. Bufano won first prize, 500 bucks, equal to about winning The Voice today. Teddy Roosevelt hated a lot of the art in the show, raging a bit about the Cubists who had been selected for the show. But he liked Bufano's work *The Group*.

"I should like to meet the artist," TR said.

Bufano settled in San Francisco, and he drew many to him. One of his friends – William Saroyan. They were drinking buddies, and widely known everywhere around town. They could often be found at Izzy Gomez's, the restaurant/bar that Nick's in *The Time of Your Life* was based on.

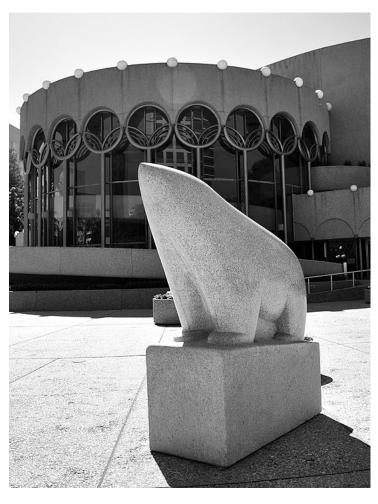
He began to create a great many works in granite and sandstone, and sometimes in concrete and steel. His works often towered, though sometimes he would make them for more personal, especially to children. A work like *Brown Bear* attracted kids to climb, to experience the statue in multiple senses. His lounging cats, such as the ones found at the Hillsdale Mall in San Mateo, are practically wearing saddles for kids to pretend they're mounting a noble steed.

Over the years, Bufano has become a somewhat hidden figure, and public art can do a sort of disappearing act. Pieces like those that litter the mall, or that you find in front of high schools or museums, can seem to blend in, be missed, and this can happen even more to the artists who made them decades before. A piece like *Universal Child*, nearly 75 feet tall, is a wonder to those who happen to stand across from it while leaving the Triton.

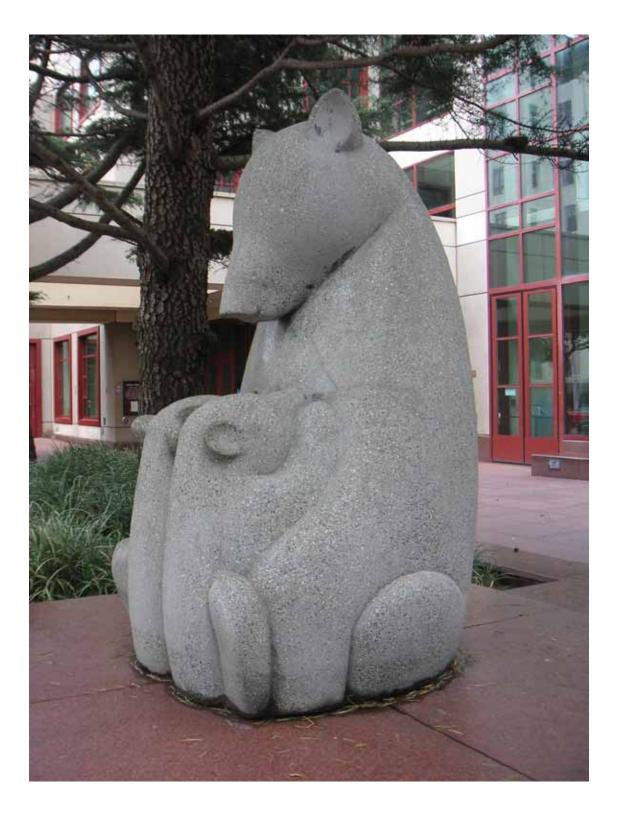
This is part of my whole concept of what public art is, and probably should be. It's about bringing art out into the world, and the interplay between the art, the setting, and

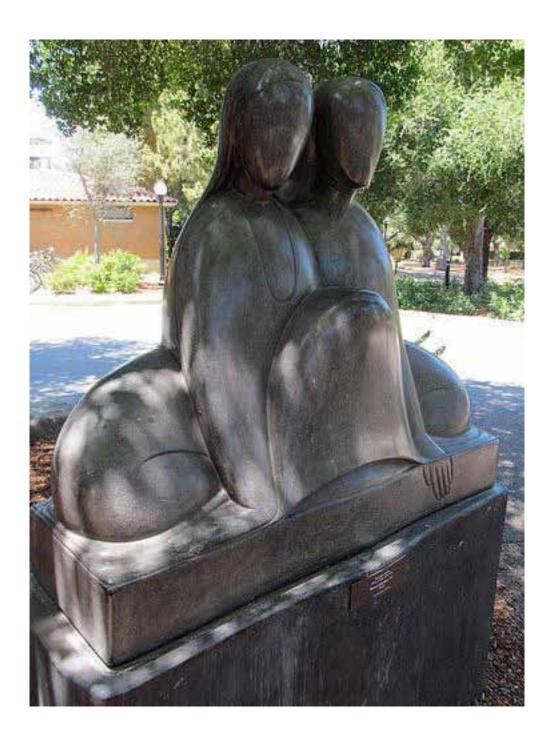
the viewer. The viewer in a traditional museum setting has a set of expectations, which includes no touching. There is public art that you shouldn't touch, but at the same time, there are some utilitarian things, like playgrounds. The idea isn't to be something that has no use in the space it occupies, it's to give a reaction beyond it's use in that space. Bufano's work does this in many ways, my favorite being that it gives a firm sense of style to venues like the CPA in San Jose. While the building and the statue are of two different forms, they do compliment each other just enough to give a signature to both.

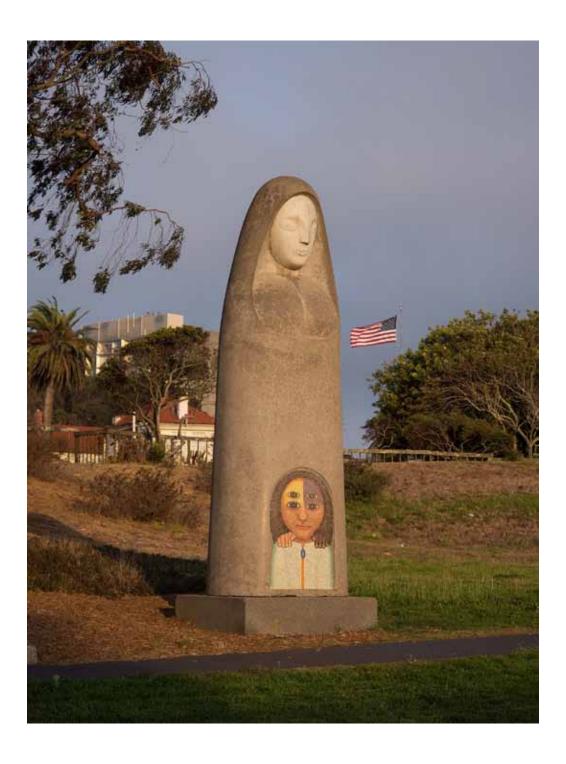
I love Benny Bufano's stuff so much. I've started researching, and soon will be writing about, the relationship between Bufano and Saroyan.

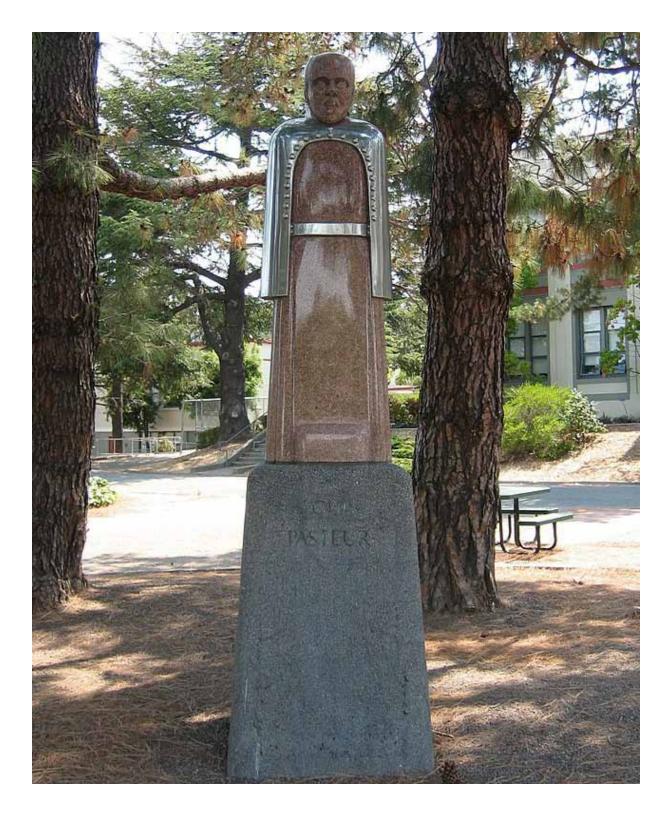








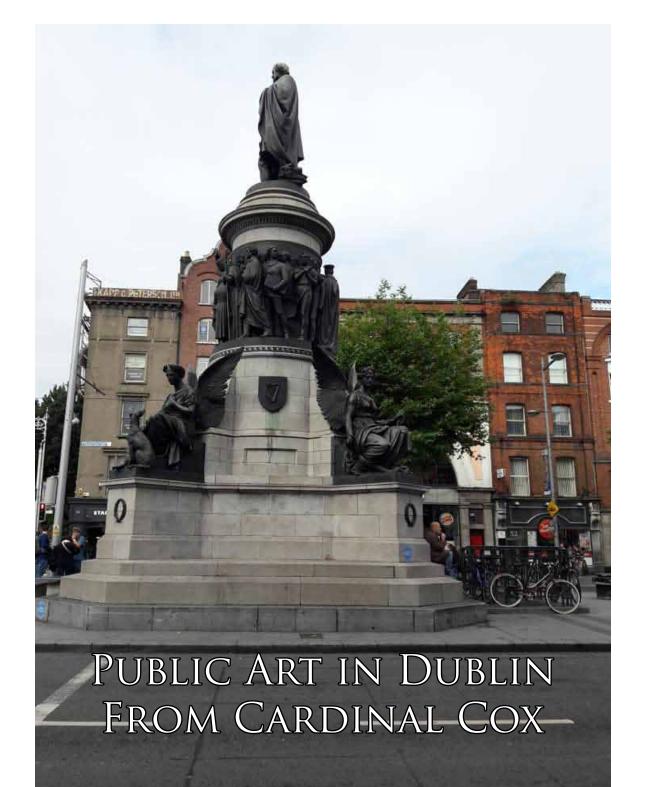




- Page 4 Universal Child at Santa Clara City Hall, Santa Clara, CA
- Page 5 Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in St. Mary Square, San Francisco, CA
- Page 6 Brown Bear and the Center for the Performing Arts, Downtown San Jose
- Page 7 St Francis de la Varenne, Frank Cresci Plaza, San Francisco, CA
- Page 8 Bear and Cubs, 530 Parnassus Street, San Francisco, CA
- Page 9 Shadows of the Future, Stanford campus
- Page 10 Peace overlooking Fort Mason Green, San Francisco, CA
- Page 11 Louis Pasteur, San Rafael High School, 310 Nova Albion Way, San Rafael, CA
- Page 12 Unveiling of Brown Bear with Benny Bufano at front.





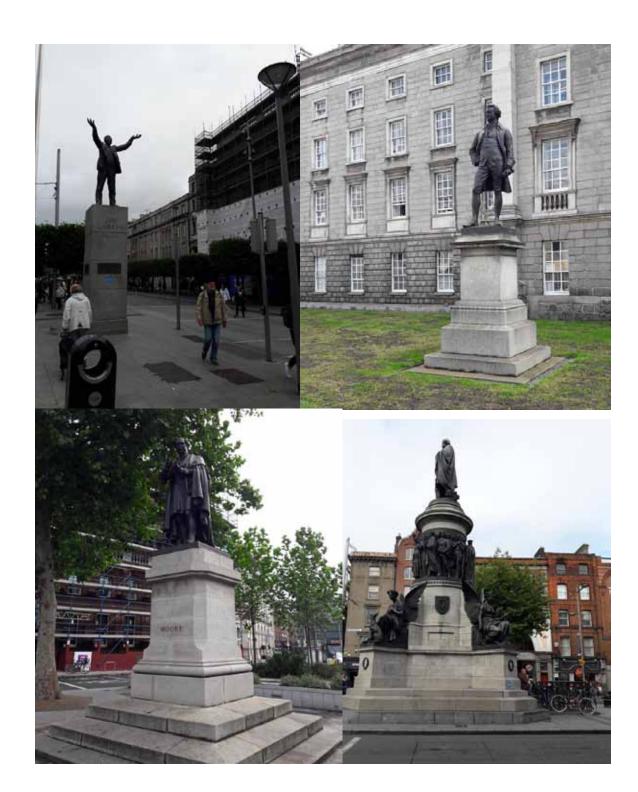














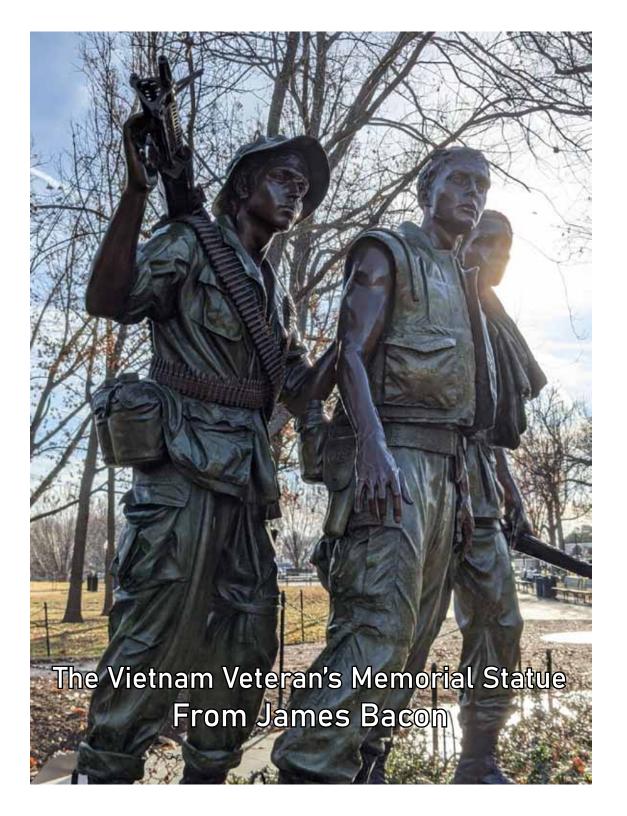


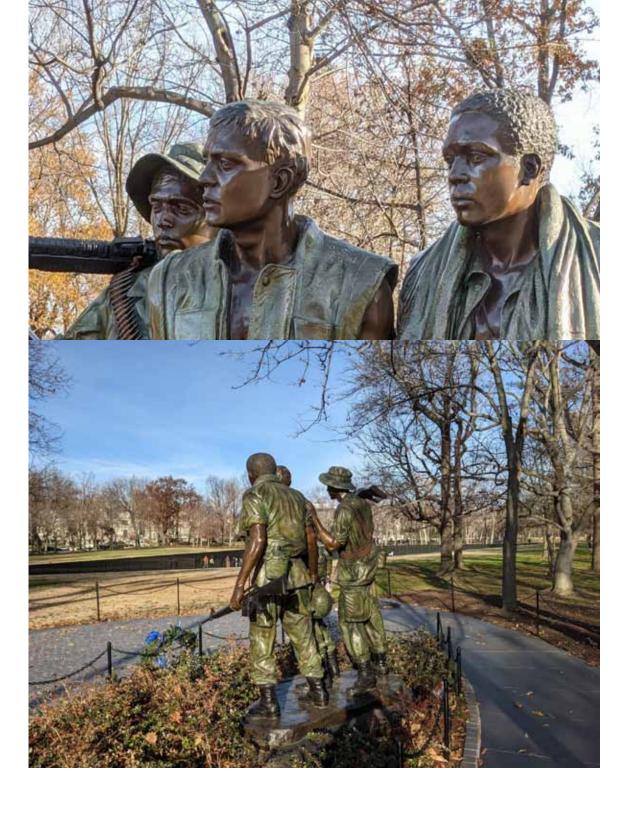
THE SACRAMENTO SPACE SHIP SOUTHSIDE PARK, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

I had come into Sacramento for the day to interview artist and filmmaker Jesse Drew. As always, I had built uin an extra hour, and still managed to arrive 90 minutes early. This meant I had time to walk about the neighborhood, and at Southside Park, I ran into this beautiful Airstream spaceship. I'm told it lights up at night, but I've never seen that!

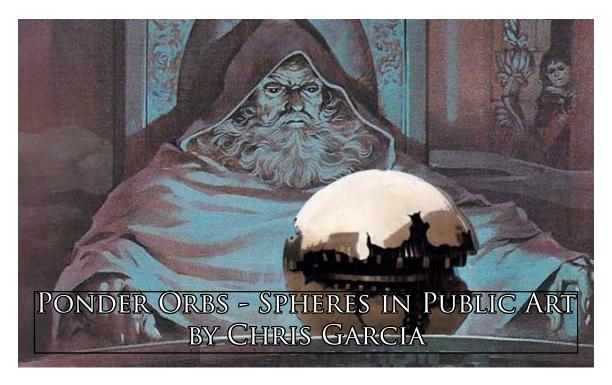
Apparently, the actual name is Alien Tourist Trailer and it was made by Joe Scarpa.











#### There are few forms that are more universal than spheres,

and thus it would make sense that orbs would have a special spot in the hearts of artists working in the public space. The sphere is universal, whether it's the coalescing dust that forms the spheres of the planets or the rough boulders worn to round pebbles.

My personal love of public art is 100% informed by a fountain in Santa Clara's Franklin Mall. It was roughly 8 feet tall, polished marble, and a reflecting pool with a blue tiled bot-



tom. The whole thing may have been meant as a reference to the moon rising out of the sea, or perhaps the Earth swimming through the firmament. In the old days, prior to the drought that's lasted a couple of decades, the sphere would have water sprinkling out of the top, shimmering down into the pool. I loved it, but the people of Santa Clara did not.

I interviewed a group dedicated to rebuilding Santa Clara's Downtown. That would mean tearing up the Sphere fountain, and I asked what they'd do with it.



"When can we send it to ya?" one if them

said.

The second orb that comes to mind is a world-wide phenomena. When I went to Dublin's Trinity College to see the *Book of Kells* and the massive library, we found a statue that I thought was awesome. A massive sphere on a small concrete hill. It was a sphere with pieces removed to show another sphere within. It's called *Sfera con Sfera* made by Arnaldo Pomodoro. I enjoyed it for half-an-hour before we headed in to the book (kinda a let down) and the library, exceptionally amazing!

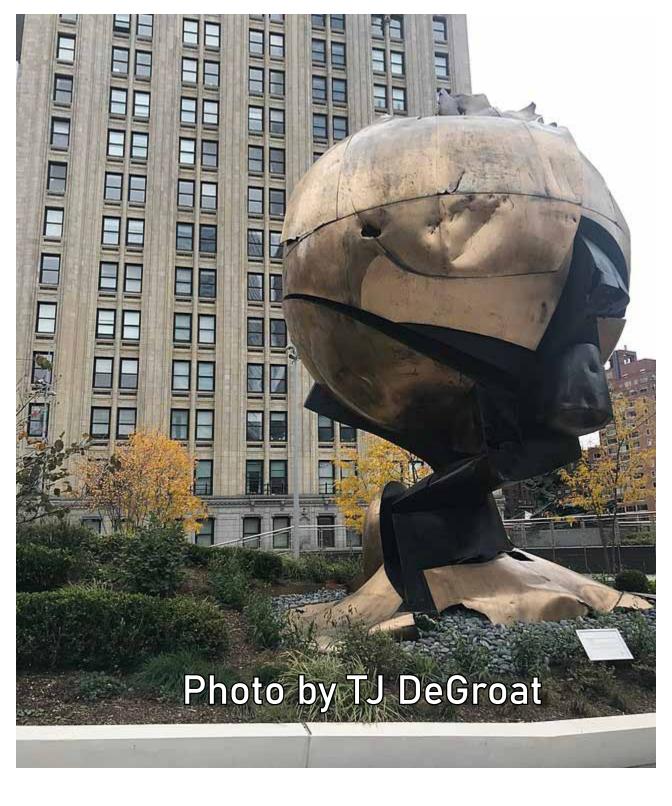
I then went to UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library to look into some Saroyan materials they had there. As I passed the Pacific Film Archive / Berkeley Art Museum and crossed the street, I came across something of a nook. In the nook was a large metal sphere. It wasn't quite as big as the one in Dublin I'd seen, but it was very similar. I couldn't find any marker for it, but later discovered it was *Sfera con Sfera* by Arnaldo Pomodoro! And not only that, but there were many others, including one at the deYoung Museum in San Francisco that I certainly must have seen, and one at the Hirschhorn Museum that I may well have when I worked at the Smithsonian American Art Museum! Others are in Hakone, Tehran, Tel Aviv, and Columbus, Ohio!

Photos by Vanessa Applegate in 2019



Almost certainly the most famous sphere public work is *The Sphere* that had stood for a few decades in the plaza between the two towers of the World Trade Center. When the towers fell, the statue was damaged, but not destroyed. Though another statue of one of the true masters of public art, *Bent Propeller* by Alexander Calder, partially survived, The Sphere survived in considerably good shape, as the Calder was crushed, and ended up badly rusted when recovered (though can now be seen in the 9-11 museum) and is no longer recogniseable without a really good label. *The Sphere* was moved to Battery Park for a number of years, before it was moved back near to where it had once stood. It's a fitting memorial to the art that one existed throughout the WTC complex, and how even a damaged New York will return, even if no longer in perfect shape. It's a good metaphor.





## Artist; curator; gallerist; collector







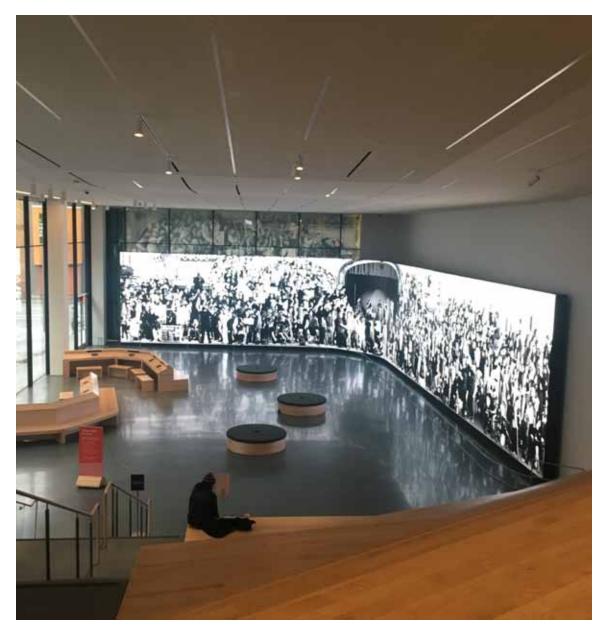
### To Benny Bufano, public art was inherently political.

"It must be monumental so that no one can take it and put it in their pocket."

That idea forms some of my thoughts about the idea of what Public Art should be, but there is the matter of what it should do and how it should serve. That will take some blessed unpacking.

The idea of monumentality as a way of keeping it to the people certainly has merit. It is, in essence, saying that no matter the meaning of the individual work, it belongs to all, and may be encountered, enjoyed, and perhaps most importantly questioned, by all. That idea is actually easy, when you come to it. It's the ideas that those monumental pieces should be carrying that becomes a bit more difficult.

The thing is the political aspect of public art for me ends at who is allowed to view it, and public art means art that is accessible to all who can get to the place to see it. OK, mostly that should mean art that is not in a museum or private home or bank vault or office building. SFMoMA has a public art space, right on the first floor, that's housed a Richard Serra when they first re-opened, and then an incredible video installation that I am still thinking about all



these years later. These are indoors, but they are also free to enter, and you can see them from the street. That makes it an interesting prospect for 'publicness' at the same time as being controlled. The message of the placement of these massive works is that they are freely available, they belong to all who can see them, at the same time as being museum objects. That same idea can be applied to pieces that are placed outside of museums. At the Smithsonian National

Museum of American Art where I worked, there was a beautiful statue at the top of the steps. That was a public art work, and a museum piece. Often, museums use these as 'attracts' to bring people in by pre-engaging them. It rarely works, most folks come in when they've already planned to come in. In this way, they are much like the Bellagio Fountains, or the Treasure Island's old pirate shows.

This also speaks to accessibility issues. Public art by it's very nature should be more accessible, at least in theory. Pieces that require walking, for example several video art installa-



tions done by the likes of Nam June Paik, are inaccessible to many, and those that are in tight spaces are as well. The economic barriers are, largely, pushed aside, but there are very often physical barriers. Sometimes, this is the point, but often it is mere oversight. Making art that is accessible to all physically is incredibly difficult in some situations, though many artists address this.

If we can accept that the idea of public art is to be at least somewhat universally accessible, then what should the messaging be of that art?

Here, we get into some big ideas that are difficult to boil down to syrup.

First off, it does not have to have an overt message. An Isamu Noguchi plinth or a Richard Serra corten steel megastructure need not have a primary message, though it certainly can have one when you look at how it is installed and the context in which it exists. That messaging comes from the exterior, and that's understandable and really unavoidable. This kind of public art is what a lot of modern piece work with, as it's hard to make Cloud Gate about something bigger than itself (though there is much more to it, and also, fuck Anish Kapoor) while it used to be easier when statues of war heroes were all the rage. Those carry pointed messaging with them, that heroism of a certain kind means that you should be memorialized. You're a war general on the winning side (usually...) then you're getting a statue! Make a massive scientific break-through? You're getting a statue... maybe. Turing has a couple, and the first use of anesthetic does, and Pasteur, and Madame Curie, and a bunch of others as well. This is a part of the Great Man theory of history, and it has bled into the arts for centuries. These give us an idea of the values of the specific sub-culture erecting the statue at the time of the erecting. This becomes clear when you look at the push to get Confederate figures memorialized throughout the US in the late 19th and 20th centuries. These are now being removed, and I am of two minds on the subject. While I agree, get rid of the Robert E. Lee and other Confederate General statues, but things that are not specifically honoring an individual, ie. non-representational, but honoring the loss of the Confederate dead should stand as grave markers. This takes some nuance, but almost always, statues have some primary messaging when it is representation. Throughout history this has been how we commemorate those we believe worthy, and the message is usually 'this personal was admirable' and then when they are no longer admirable, and in the case of many leaders as soon as they are no longer leading, they've been removed, destroyed, the memories they represented no longer physically manifest.

Public art also allows a much stronger opportunity for the viewer to express and recontextualize works that are in public. The example is the way heroes of the Soviet Union statues have been treated in the former Eastern Bloc countries. They are frequently defaced, and sometimes in ways more creative than simple destruction. There was a trend of painting Bulgarian statues left by the Soviets in fun ways, sometimes just painting them pink, and sometimes painting them to look like Western characters like Superman, Ronald McDonald, and Santa



Claus. That was fun! The idea that they are taking away the dignity of these figures is a real one, and that's also the point. It is the Bulgarian expression of their freedom by re-contextualizing those works as their own, and thus taking ownership of them. It also pisses the Russians off, which is always a plus. With the Russian invasion of the free and independent nation of The Ukraine, many Russian statues were painted the blue and yellow of the Ukrainians, because fuck Putin, and that's a key element of the entire thing. These statues represent something, and that representation in public art means that it is possible for the public to comment on them using paint, screwdrivers, hammers, and hoists.

Of course, the destruction of the Berlin Wall could also be taken as the destruction of a Public Art piece. That's a tougher sell, but hear me out. The Wall was far from impenetrable, and the East would have known this. Yes, it would an impediment, but largely it was there to stand as a symbol for people on both sides to see. One side turned it into an art object, without question, through graffiti, and the other is served a purpose to a degree. The Wall had a message attached – 'don't you run' on one side, 'don't come in here' on the other. The destruction of it was an art of performance as much as an act of border opening.

OK, back on track.

The idea presented by a work of Public Art need not to egalitarian, nor for lack of a better word, liberal. The famed *Charging Bull* of Wall Street is an excellent example of one that is almost conspicuously conservative, or at least capitalistic. The temporary installation of the young girl standing in front of it, recontextualizing it via the interplay between the two, chang-



ing the message of the over-all piece it creates into something akin to 'the children of today will stop you' is good example of a piece having multiple meanings. Those of a certain stripe can look at the bull and see it as charging, and about to crush that child. It's a valid reading of that situation, or it could be read as the bull pulling up so that it doesn't run over that child because even within a capitalistic system there is always compassion. It could be the young one is far more powerful than that bull will ever be, or the point could just be the bravery of the stance. There are also those who would simply ignore the child, see only the bull and what it represents (at least to English speakers, but there's a WHOLE 'nother article on sociolinguistics and how it must be applied to all works of public art and I'm getting tired.

There is, of course, a spectrum where commercialism pops up. I am trying to wrap my head around where signage inserts itself in this entire idea of public art. If public art is in service of a corporation, and that is the essential duty of a sign, then is it strictly to be considered as a part of the corporate world. Again, the Bellagio Fountains comes in to play. Is it any less a work of performance art since it serves as the attract for a casino? In my eyes, no, but I'm a lot more conservative than many. It serves as MORE than an advertisement (and whether or not they are art I've talked about when considering the 1984 Apple ad) and it could be viewed as a cup running over. It all a piece fills is its corporate needs, ie wayfinding and identification, then



you could pass that off as not a work of public art. On the other hand, if it goes beyond, and let's throw something like the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade into the mix, then I would place it into the world of Public Art. Some would say that any

corporate interest would disqualify it as 'public art' and move it into 'corporate art' though I couldn't do that because applying that ideal you quickly realise that nearly all art by folks like da Vinci or Reubens becomes corporate since The Church pretty much filled the role as corporation in those times.

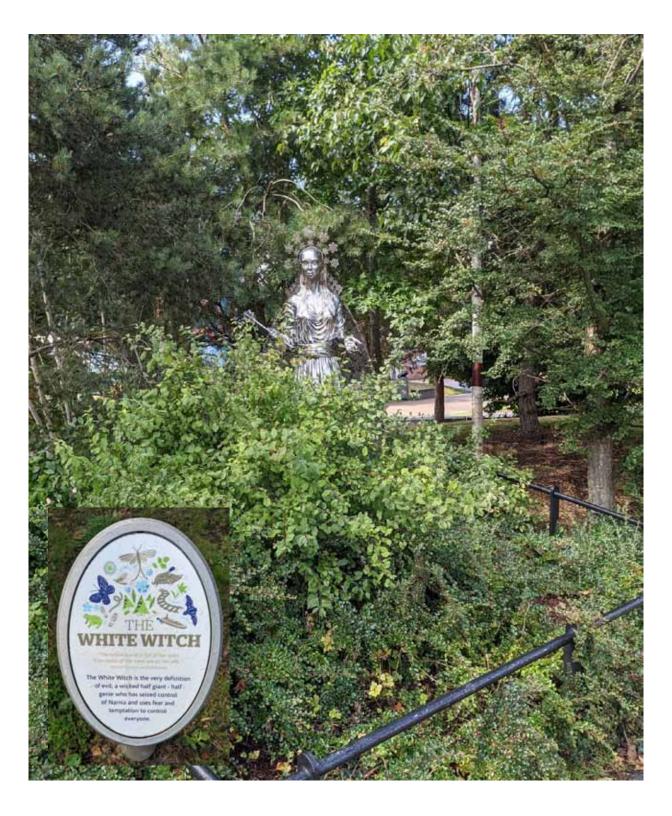
Let's get into the idea of what a public art piece should do for its community. This is another idea that has several sides. Things that a piece of public art can do – serve as a marker of values, become a wayfinding tool, provide an area of physical engagement, allow for spiritual or philosophical contemplation, or provide shade, shelter, or privacy. There was a statue in San Jose, abstract but it kinda looked like two hands reaching up and covering a center cavity about 5 feet in diameter. This served as a location for local teens to enjoy each other (I will admit to having had a couple of sexy times within it) or to just hang out (I also once slept it off within it) and was often a place where the homeless would sleep, or simply use it as a restroom. These functions would likely never have been in the mind of the sculptor, but they certainly became apparent when it was installed. One of the things I absolutely reject about Public Art is that it is supposed to serve no practical purpose, or if it does, that that purpose must be for whimsy or play. A statue you can run under when it starts to rain is essential in some areas, a needle-like installation towering above letting you know how close you are to a thing is practical, too. The marker of values thing is key to understanding why a piece was created, and to understanding the times in which it came about, but it is that last, that ideal of function, that becomes important when you add in the unownable concept. Those that would have need of public art that provides shelter or privacy are likely those that need it most. This may not be aesthetically pleasing, but it is a function they can and sometimes should perform. If you've got a milelong piece that is representing a cresting wave, and you happen to come upon hard times as a community, to not make that area available when homelessness becomes a massive issue seems wrong. It also recontextualizes it, and on and on and on.

Ultimately, while I'm with Bufano on the idea that the monumentality of public art makes it owned more by the world than by any individual, I think beyond that any thought is fair game. Yes, you can make a statue in support of whatever hateful thing you like, and as a work of public art, that can be attacked for what it represents, but that doesn't make it any less a work of art, nor any less public art. Public Art neither should or shouldn't represent the ideals of those who are going to be encountering it, though almost always they will reflect them. This aspect but should be approached as if they are representing them. That can mean a number of different things. If I see a work depicting the swearing in of Trump, where it's placed is going to determine whether or not I think it's a memorial piece or a celebratory piece. The same can go for any commemorated event or person. The context of the placement matters, and that will change as time goes by. And that is an important aspect of public art that I believe in - permanence. Yes, there will performance pieces or pieces that are supposed to wear away, but one thing that Public Art can do is stand as a marker of times gone by. That is both a positive and a negative, as we are seeing. They key is to understand that a work is not merely for the now, but for the time of its existence. You do not step into the same stream twice, but public art is a boulder in that river, and has to be addressed with the water that flows against it in the now.



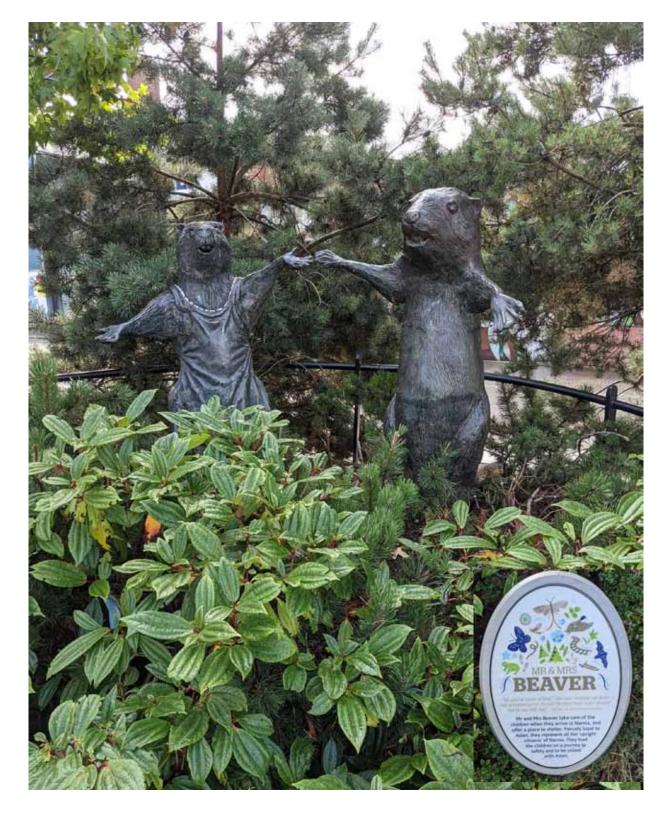


CS Lewis Public Art, Belfast by James Bacon





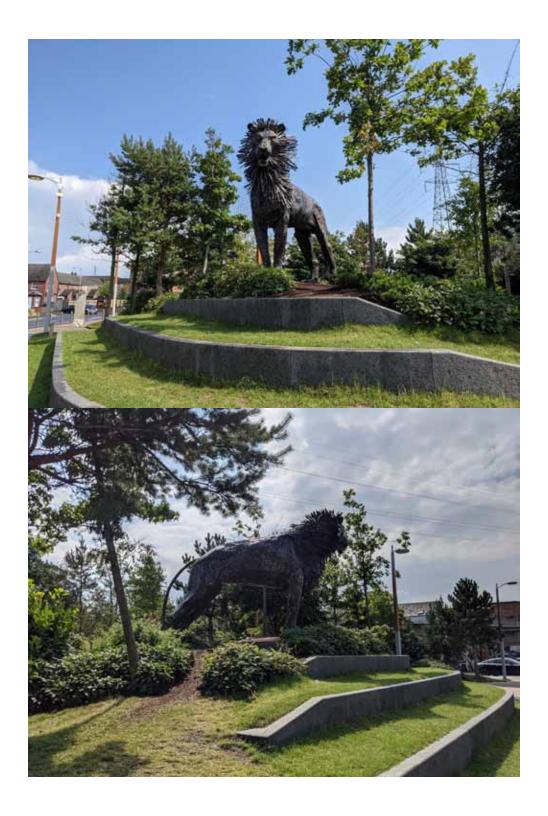


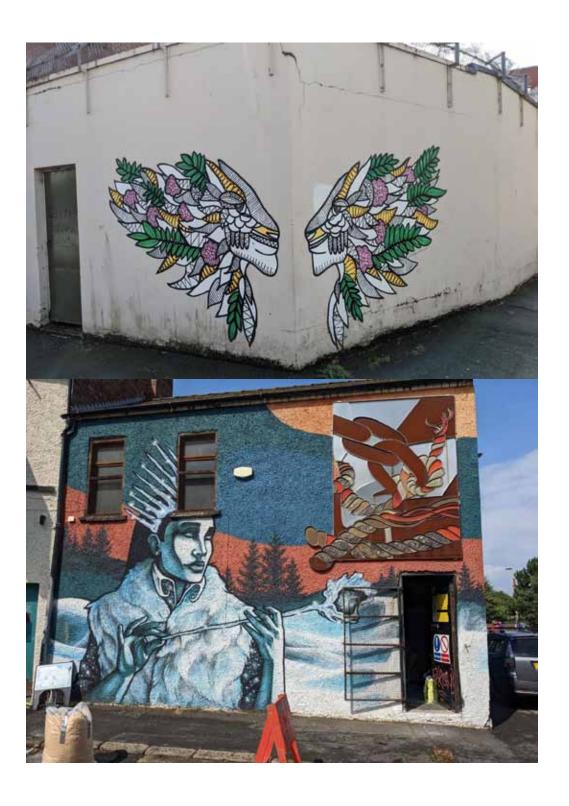


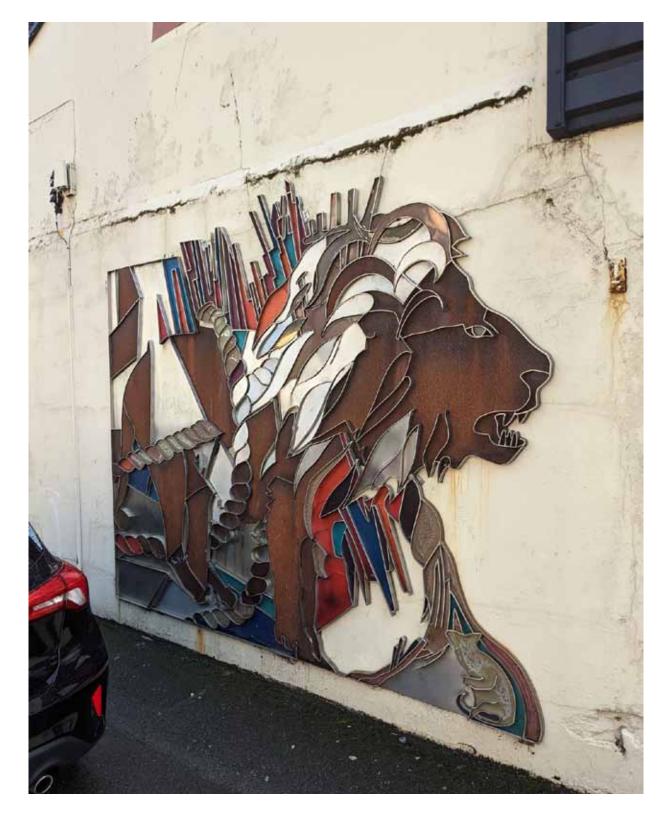












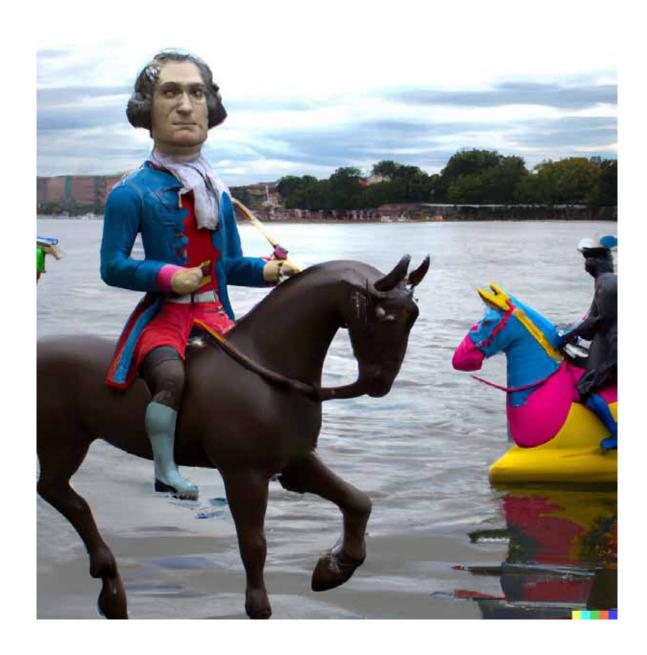






DALL\*E 2 Interprets
\*Washington Crossing the Delaware by
Jeff Koons Public Art\*







The Public Art of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen

## The story of 20th century art is fascinating.

and we're finally seeing some of the most important figures of the second half of the century pass away. Claes Oldenburg died in 2022, and he represented the most significant figure of the Pop Art age still working. His work had slowed a good deal since the passing of his wife and partner Coosje van Bruggen in 2009. The passing of Christo in 2020 left Oldenburg and Richard Serra as the last two major names doing large-scale works in the 1960s still producing. Serra continues his work, though he was never a Pop artist, though hugely influential on the growing Public Art scene.

Even prior to marrying Coosje in 1977, Oldenburg's public works were making the scene. *Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks* was installed at Yale to serve as a speaker's platform. It had an inflated portion and wooden treads, but it clearly wasn't built for long-term



outdoors life, and Claes had to re-work it into the form it is in today in 1974. The piece, installed the year Yale admitted women for the first time, may be commenting on that fact, and the fact that it stood as a speakers platform adds an element of female empowerment to it. It's toured a bit, but it certainly has a specific place it belongs.

Clothespin is another early work, 1974 to be specific, and one that solidified Oldenburg in the public art space. It was installed over the City Hall subway stop in Philadelphia, and that alone shows what the work means to the city. The piece towers, and it's a simple reminder that ordinary things, when presented in extraordinary ways, are well worth the label of high art. The work is almost the best example of Pop

Art public art there is, because it's got so many things going on, with references from 1776 in the spring, to the positioning of the work.

In Chicago, *Batcolumn* became one of the most important of Oldenburg's solo works because it was not only monumental, but it was exceptionally well-placed in Chicago. It's a bit of a departure, as it's basket-like weave of steel is meant to echo, and not reproduce the image of a bat. Still, it's obviously a baseball bat and it's fantastic, though I doubt I'll get to see it in Chiburg when I'm out there.

*Crusoe Umbrella*, 1979, is the first major work that the husband-and-wife team worked on. It's based on an illustration from Robinson Crusoe, and it's at the Des Moines Civic Center. This one is the one that started the pair as the public art juggernauts they became.

"In January 1978, after a year living and working in the Netherlands, we returned to the studio in New York, resolved to devote ourselves entirely to outdoor scale site-specific sculptures permanently located in public situation" Oldenburg said in an interview.

The hits just started rolling from that point forward, with one major work after another. Flashlight at UNLV was the first I think I saw in person, and certainly still one of my faves. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, they designed and installed dozens of incredible works around the world, including Cross Section of a Toothbrush with Paste, in a Cup, on a Sink: Portrait of Coosje's Thinking in Krefeld, Germany that is one of the most whimsical of all their works. The fountain Spoonbridge and Cherry is also from this period, and it's in Minneapolis Sculpture Park.

And then, Binoculars.

Frank Gehry designed the Chiat/Day building, which was a bit restrained for him in the 1990s. To spruce up the entrance to the parking garage, they added the Oldenburg-van Bruggen binoculars, which are giant, one of the most massive of all their works. You actually drive through



the work to get into the building, which I believe is largely Google these days (and somewhere, Benny Bufano weeps...) but also marks an important collaboration between Gehry and Oldenburg.

Shuttlecocks, at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City is one of the most amusing of their large-scale pieces. When you look at the museum from the far side of the



lawn, it just looks like two discarded shuttlescocks, but they're actually large statues. This says a lot about how we see public art compared to how we see gallery or museum art.

Houseball might be another in the line of whimsical works, and I may be crazy, but this me something of a playful dig at the master wrapper, Christo. The work resembles a draped and tied down bunch of stuff you'd find in a house. The idea that a house has been bundled is amusing enough, but through in the idea that the other biggest name artist in this space worked often in wrapping buildings, and I think this ties together into a bit of a gentle rib.

2000's *Flying Pins* in Eindhoven in The Netherlands, is an incredibly dynamic piece of public art, and one that I wish I could see someday. It's a beautiful concept, and it shows what the team would be doing over the following years by allowing only portions of the items represented showing above ground while still giving an idea of movement.

And that is perfectly shown by the amazing piece of San Francisco public art, *Cupid's Span*. It's a portion of a bow and arrow that pokes out from Rincon park. The new portion of the Bay Bridge is visible and it's just about perfect. The setting of the water mixed with the green and the way that the arc of the bridge interplays makes it incredibly powerful within its space. It's one of my three fave Oldenburgs, and easily my fave of the collaborations with van Brudden.



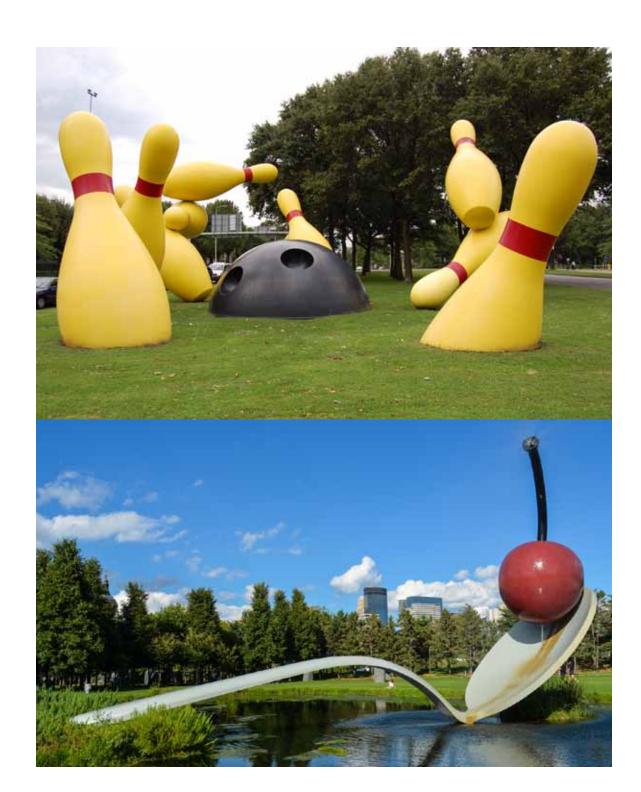
(the other two Oldenburgs I love above all else – *Pastry Case* (clearly a reference to Wayne Thibaud) and *Floor Burger*)

OK, as the early 2000s went on, several impressive pieces hit. The steel and aluminium piece *Spring* in Seoul, South Korea, is 70 feet of awesome. Big Sweep in Denver is really impressive and a great climbing structure. *Tumbling Tacks* in Kistefos, Norway. That one is beautiful, a set of giant thumbtacks that seem to be tumbling down a forest mountain. Coosje chose the colors and final forms, but passed away before the installation. This is certainly a good one to leave us on, because it's one of the most dynamic, most playful, and just plain best of all the work they did together.

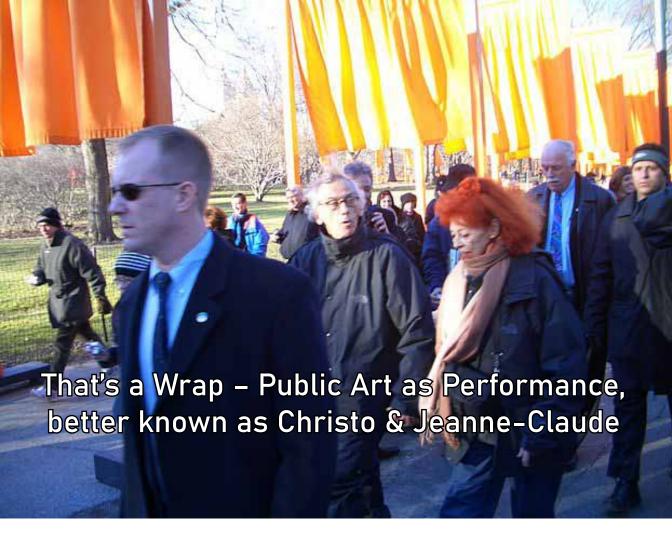
I'd say that *Paint Torch* in 2011, was Oldenburg's last great work. It's a lovely work, a paintbrush looming over the plaza with a swirl of paint (which a lot of people say looks like the poop emoji...) that both light up from within. It's a nice piece, but not one that draws the same feelings of joy that his work in the 70s, 80s, and especially 90s and 2000s.

His loss is a major one for the art world that had lost so many important figures over the last three or four years – Christo, Chuck Close, Margaret Keane, Wayne Thibaud, John Baldassari, Susan Rothenberg, William T. Wiley, and Beverly Pepper. All figures I'd hoped would be around a lot longer. Oldenburg had a bigger effect on me than most, save for Thibaud, a wonderful human being who was so generous with his time. What Claes represented to the world, a sort of earnest version of Jeff Koons perhaps, will truly be missed.









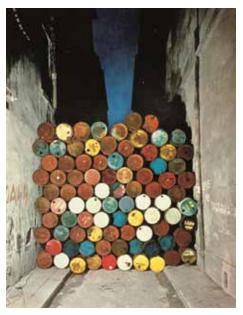
## Supposedly, my parents took me to see Running Fence.

Maybe I was destined to love public art.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude were among the most famous artists in the world throughout the 1970s and 80s, and well into the 2000s. Their works were Environmental, as well as incidental. They were famous for the idea that you could cover something and that was a form of revelation, to hide a thing from view revealing its essential nature.

Though they'd deny that; for them it was all about the aesthetic interaction. In that way, they're Jeff Koons' singular philosophy without the dollar signs...

And thus, the contradiction that is Christo and Jeanne-Claude, and their particular version of public art.



Let us start with Christo. Born Christo Vladimirov Javacheff in 1935 Bulgaria. He was trained in art early, and then WWII happened and he was sent to the mountains to wait it out. Bulgaria was a crazy place both during and after the war. He studied at the Sofia Academy of Fine Arts, and on the weekends, they all had to paint propaganda. That's part of why he wanted to get out. He also just flat didn't like school. He hopped a box car and headed to Vienna, and then studied at the Vienna Fine Arts Academy, which he also didn't like. He kinda bounced around until 1958, when he got a visa for France and headed to Paris.

Jeanne-Claude was born in 1935 in Casablanca. He father was an Army officer. She earned a Latin and philosophy from University of Tunis, but her mother married General Jacques de Guillebon and

moved to Paris in 1957. The pair met the old fashioned way – Christo was hired to paint a portrait of Jeanne-Claude's mother. Initially, he wanted to be with Jeanne-Claude's sister Joyce, which was OK because Jeanne-Claude was engaged to be married, but during the engagement, the pair hooked up and Jeanne-Claude was pregnant when she married.

And the baby was Christo's.

And she did marry her original fiancé.

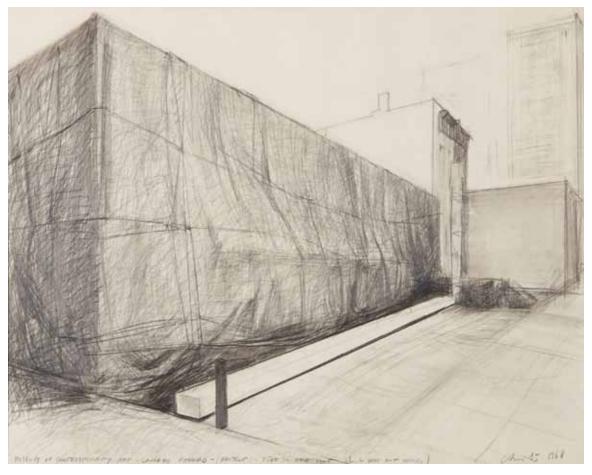
And she did go on the honeymoon.

And she did dump him for Christo right after she got back.

Cyril Christo was born in 1960. He's a filmmaker.

By 1961, the pair were doing impressive stuff. The first show was full of wrapped household items, and there was a sort of commentary piece where they blocked an alley with two hundred oil drums. This might have been seen as a reference to the recent construction of the Berlin Wall, or perhaps to the slow rise of the Oil Monarchs and how they were able to temporarily clog up the works of the world, but if you did the same piece today, it would be incredibly poignant for a number of reasons. This really did show where they were going, as they'd work with wrapping objects and oil barrels for decades to come.

They started working on larger pieces at this point, as well as what they called 'Store Fronts.' They looked like, wait for it, store fronts. These were important pieces, they're lovely, and they have one at Stanford's Cantor Art Center. This is also where they found their way to make money. First, they would not take commissions or grants. They'd do pre-drawings and even marquets and models and then sell those to fund the actual creation of the pieces. This



allowed them to keep control over their work, as well as drive their market. They really covered their bases.

The first large scale work that caught notice happened to be one of the pieces that many point to as the start of the second wave of environmental art. Air Packages were an extension of the wrapped objects that Christo had been doing for years. They used Christo as a singular name for the two of them for a number of years, before settling on Christo & Jeanne-Claude as their nom du Arte. The original plan was to wrap the tower of the museum, but they couldn't get teh permissions. Instead, they put up these large wrapped packages that blocked the view of the museum. It was an interesting piece that represented one of their key ideas - revelation through concealment. The act of hiding a things brings its fundamental essense to light. They also started their whole "every interpretation is right" trip here. It's a good piece, and the most public of their pieces up to this point.

Their use of barrels came to an interesting point in 1968 when they did 112 Barrels

*Structure* in Palais de Tokyo in Paris. It's a very large stack of barrels, and it was out among a garden of more traditional sculpture, but it was brazenly placing the barrels in the context of the sculpture garden, and playing with the context of the setting.

Then, the first big bang - Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City. They'd had a piece of inflated art that stood 280 feet tall in Documenta IV, but this, this was a big freakin' deal. They wrapped the museum in the same way they'd wrapped their household objects, but this time, it was a museum, making the entire setting of the art within set inside a secondary artwork. In essense, every piece in that museum had been subsumed. This was Christo's first big American impression.

The public did not like.

Now, I get it, Chiristo and Jeanne-Claude's projects aren't always the prettiest things. They're rough and looking at the existing photos, I certainly would have felt like they were fumigating. The previous year they had done two large wrapped projects, one a fountain and Medieval tower in Italy, and then a Kunsthalle in Bern, Switzerland. That one went over big, but in Kansas City, they hated it. It made a giant splash for the pair, and they started in on more, and much bigger projects.

And that is where Jeanne-Claude shined!

She had an almost preternatural gift for logistics. Christo might have been more of the vision for a piece, but she knew how to make it happen, how to get the ropes right, how to make the math work out. The follow-on piece, the 1.5 mile long sections of Australian coast they wrapped called *Wrapped Coastline*. That was followed up by wrapping two more Italian monuments, and then a minor setback that was also an ambitious win. They puyt a nylon curtain across the center of a Colorado valley called *Valley Curtain*. It succeded in coming to life, it was installed in 1972, but it was removed following a gale through the valley not even two days later. That wasn't the original plan, but it got a lot of attention. While *Wrapped Coastline* was a bigger piece, this took a type of technical know-how that was beyond any piece of environmental art undertaken to that time.

Ane then, Running Fence.

They did a large project in Rhode Island where they put a plastic sheet over a cove, which really didn't make nearly as big an impact as it should have, and they wrapped a portion of Roman wall in Rome, but neither of these had the long-lasting impact of *Running Fence*. At 22 miles, it was a long piece of art, simply a fabric fence. It stood for 14 days, and then the ranchers were given all the materials used. Today, no trace of the piece remains, which is both a shame and kinda the point. It was meant to be a moment in time, and beyond that, who knows. It was a lovely, and to a degree a meditative piece. I supposedly saw it.

The next major hit had to be *Surrounded Islands*, which was a series of 11 islands in Biscayne Bay Miami that were surrounded by pink sheeting. This was huge, more than six-



and-a-half-million square feet of sheeting. It seemed to standout in the water much like the red tides that were being reported at the time. It's a lovely piece, one of the largest environmental pieces ever attempted, but it was also arguably the most Pop piece they ever tried.

They wrapped the Pont Neuf, the oldest bridge in Paris, and that became a famous work due to the precision of the work done. The Pont is visible and identifiable as the bridge, with its distinguishing characteristics all present. The impression that the bridge had gained, and the ways in which locals had a template of what it looked like made it an impossible to miss work, and the fact they were finally doing a big piece in Paris helped make it one of their most famous.

They took a while off wrapping things after that.

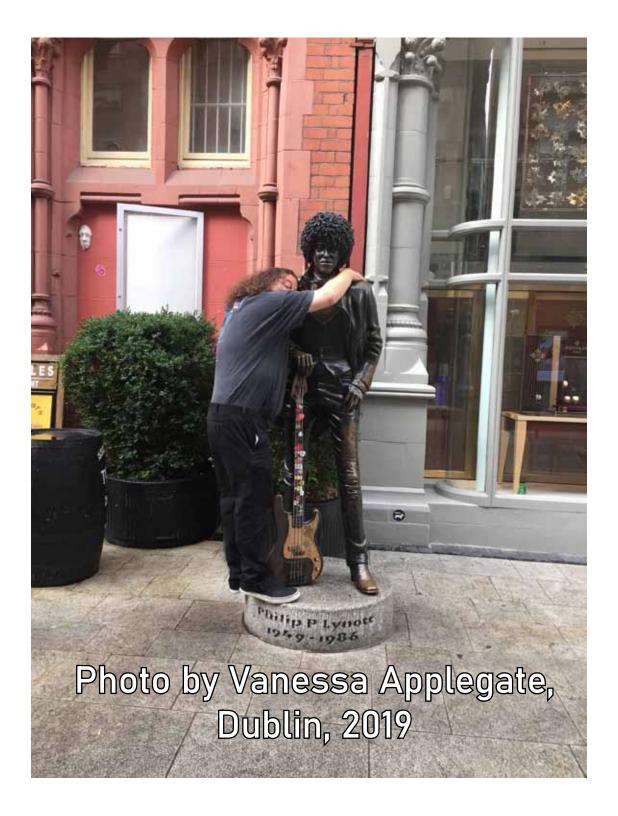
*Umbrellas*, a series of large umbrellas installed simultaneously in both Japan and California in 1984. I have a vague recoolection of driving down to Disneyland and seeing them briefly from the highway. This got a lot of attention for problems - two people died, a woman who was a viewer in California, and a worker during the deinstallation in Japan.

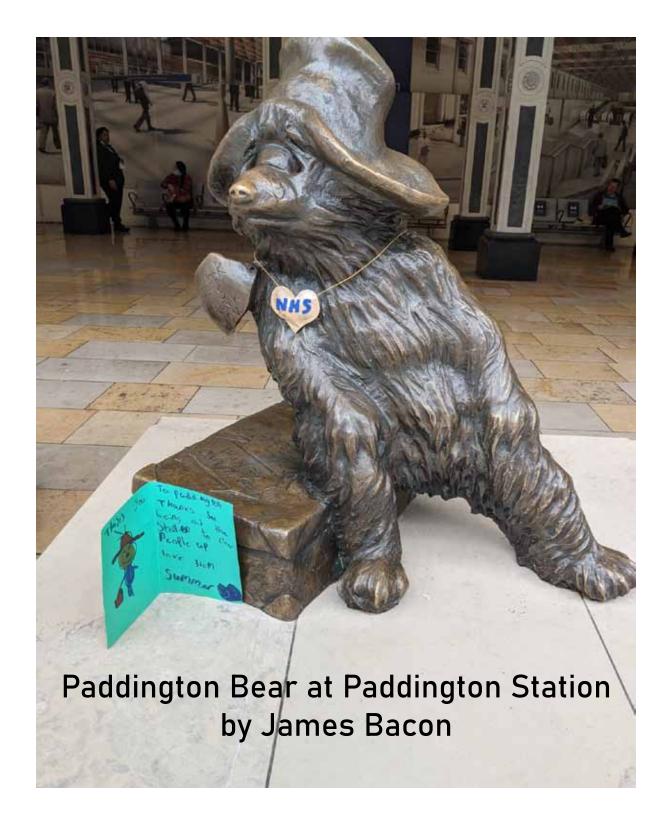
The massive amount of publicity that *Umbrellas* got made the work *Wrapped Reichstag* that much bigger. The building was wrapped much like Pont Neuf, but so much bigger. They made a fascinating and smart choice - they used a silver fabric and blue ropes. The color of Judaism. There's layers to this one, in both meaning and material.

I ran through many of the *Gates* that were installed in Central Park. These were fun, but really, they lacked the overall impact of *Running Fence* or the grandeur of *Umbrellas*. It was after a couple of more projects that Jeanne-Claude passed away, but Christo himself finished a few more, one of which was the wrapping of the Arc d'Triumph. That one was even better than Pont Neuf. The symbol beneath came through so thoroughly, but the real joy of it was the way it forced Parisiennes to consider what their monuments mean to them.

There are others. but they turned sculpture and environmental art into performance art. The temporary nature of so much of it, combined with the recycling aspect that made them not only temporary, but fleeting. There are few artifacts of these projects, mostly those pre-drawaings and other materials they sold to pay for the projects, and a lot of photos. The work was public, but it was time-limited public art, which speaks to the limiting of an audience. The idea of a performance art piece is to capture the moment with each viewer having an individual view that is informed by not only who they are, but what they can experience from it. A flash mob of hundreds of Zombie lurchers in a Mall is a performance art work, but each individual viewing it is likely only getting a small piece of it, and those who see it through video are only interacting with an artifact. Typically, it would be best to view said artifact as a Video Artwork, but there's a lot of arguing to do on that matter.











## Alexander Calder and My Sons

My kids are fond of art, but really, they just like climbing on things. This makes them de facto Public art fans. They usually try and climb statues, and there's one in particular they enjoyed.

Le Faucon, the Falcon, at Stanford.

Now, many of you will know that my children were born at Lucile Packard's Children's Hospital at Stanford. They were born almost three full months early, and we were in the hospital for four total months between her time preventing early birth and the time the kids were gaining weight and learning how to, you know, survive.

It was a tough time.

I spent a lot of time going through the hospital's hanging art. There was much much, and I simply fell in love with art all over again. That, more than any single thing, is what brought me back to modern and contemporary art, and why I started my podcasts, and why I've been writing zines. Not too long after we got out, I started to go to the Cantor Museum on the Stanford campus, and a little later, The Anderson Collection.

Now, the Stanford NICU and PICN are kinda tight. If your kid went through, they keep track of you, a little bit. Every summer, they have a reunion, at Stanford. I love going, but we haven't made it every year. We did got a couple of years ago, and it was a good time.

Now, I drove to meet the family there, I think I was coing from some meeting or another, and Vanessa had to leave and I took the kids. We wandered around Stanford for the first time as a trio, and they were literally uninterested until we came up to a large twisted steel statue.

Now, Benji can be an insane whirling dervish of madness, but JP has cerebral palsy, and that makes things a little difficult. He walks well, but sometimes he tires easily and doesn't do well at anything requiring coordination. When we made our way to the Law School court-yard, it turned out that this was exactly what JP wanted. Ben ran up to the statue and had run up the side and jumped off. This was completely within normal operations.

But JP charged, and jumped, grabbing on to what I'll call the tailfin at the back of the piece. JP's jumping rarely see both his feet leave the ground, but this time, they left the ground, even if just a little, and he got his arms over. While Benji ran up and down, jumping off the statue, JP just sorta hung there. his feet kinda dangling, but also kinda touching the ground.

I practically cried.



JP's challenges are hard on him. He wants to run and climb like his brother. He wants to be able to jump off high places, or do the monkey bars, but he's not really able to do any of that himself. But that day, that day he jumped, and he caught the point of the stayble and hung there, all on his own, happily smiling.

Then he said his arms hurt and he wanted to get down. I took him to the top of the curvy part and he slid on his butt into my waiting arms.

Somehow, during all of this, the other child managed to get all the way to the top of the wing, and if I hadn't reacted as quickly as I did, he probably would have tried to do a belly flop on to the bricks.

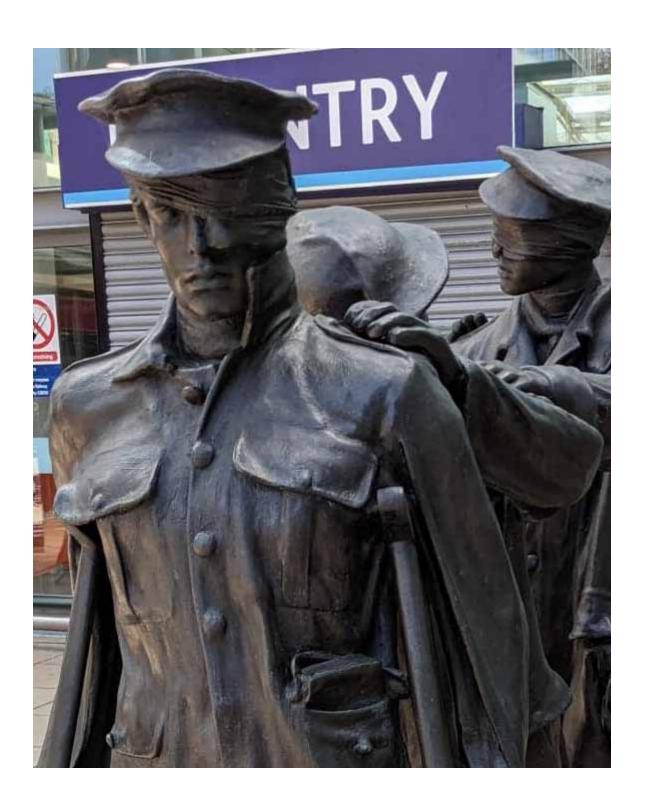
Those are my children. I love them more than anything.





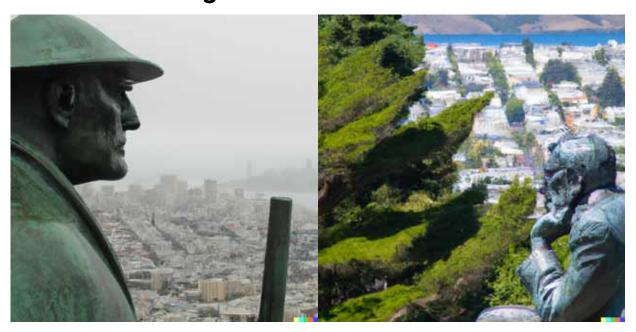








DALL\*E 2 Interprets "Public Art work Looking over San Francisco"





# A Piece on the Sociolinguistic Aspects of Some Public Art That I am in No Way Qualified to Write by Chris

# Do not quote this in your term paper; it is unresearched and basically off the top of my head, like all my writing. I have been think-

it is unresearched and basically off the top of my head, like all my writing. I have been thinking, in language, about the effects of language on art, and particularly on Public Art, that is art that is intended to be experienced while in the world. That's the thing about public art, the thing indicated by the word 'public art' (which is a word that happens to have a space in the middle) you don't necessarily have the ability to avoid encountering it, and that can make it intrusive. Gallery art requires a choice be made, a choice to visit, to bend your will towards it, at least in some fashion. Public art may be encountered through a bending of will, but it can also just be looming over you when you get on the subway. Gallery art, thus, often makes

a bigger impact because typically, and some folks are shocked that they walk by a Serra piece every day. Public Art can be ignored, or can shape your interactions with the world, but it is, at least in some form, in the world.

And that means it deals in language, at least to some degree.

You see, humans are built to process the world through symbols, and at this stage in our evolutionary trip, that means language. When a work of art deals in language... well I think Chomsky would say that all art deals in language because all human experience is mediated through language, which does make sense, but at the same time it's been true and false that all art has dealt with language. The Surrealists certainly played with ideas of language as counterpoint for artistic expression, you just have to look at the fairly simplisticially complicated *This* is not a Pipe, while Dali played with a little bit of complicatedly complicated linguistic interplay in his works of the 1960s. The Abstract Expressionists did not necessarily reject language, they just didn't give a shit about them. They were more concerned with the idea of the art of painting as painting. Even when folks like Diebenkorn became more concerned with representation, they were working with a non-linguistic form of representation, that is to say, they were directly referencing the emotional impact of the scene or subject and making ti into an expression through abstraction of form or color. That's the biggest difference from the POP artists, who were WAY into the symbol, and often the word. Robert Indiana is one of the best examples. LOVE, his best-known work and one that he worked hundreds of times, requires the viewer to have several things in order to form a template of interaction. The first is simple - color. Every viewer has an emotional reference to color set, and that'll be informed by the life experience of every viewer. Yes, I am aware that is true of every single interaction with every single thing in the world, but stick with me. The processig of that kind of information is near instantaneous... or maybe its just me. I dunno. Again, unresearched. The next thing is you have to deal with the language.

Now first, at the most basic level, you have to know that 'L-O-V-E' spells Love. You also have to know that mean Arranged with thwe L and O above the V and E it still spells LOVE.

This is actually a big thing and one I want to go into.

In English, we go top-to-bottom, left-to-right. There are languages that go top-to-bottom right-to-left, and there are Ox-plow languages.

I need to explain these, don't I?

OK.

English path

LO

VΕ



Arabic and other right-to-left path

OL

ΕV

Ox-plow

LO

 $E\,V$ 

OK, I know Ox-plow has a real name (Boustrophedonic) but that is too hard for me to remember.

OK, so you've recognised that the word is love, and if you speak English, though he did

others in various languages, your brain will go through several stages of interpretation. The first is the instantaneous recognition of the word, then the recognition of what that word means. Love is a broad category-type word. It can be the love of a mother for a child, a lover for their... uh... lover, a friend for their bestie, a man for a good cigar. All of those are indicated by that sigle word, and the viewer will pluck one out and say thats what the artist is indicating. The most frequent reading was that the 'love' Indiana was refering to os the kinda nebulous Hippy type of love that was goiong around, and that's a fine reading, but far from the only one. But the versions of love that are in public, like the one in Philly, are doing more work.

One perfectly fine reading (and notice when we talk about what a work of art means we call it a 'reading' directly tied to the idea of language) is that Indiana (or the people who put the work there) are asking you to consider adding some love to your daily life. A fine reading, infact, and probably the one closest to Indiana's intent. Another is that the work itself is love, an act of kindness granted to the viewer, breaking up the monotony of the every day with this piece of whimsy. Another is that this is what the word 'love' means; it is nothign more than a



piece in the world that means nothing until you encounter it and have to try and fit it in. That's a kinda darker than I'd like reading, but it's there.

And all of those ideas are mediated by language, because the piece itself is a part of language.

That's where the 'socio-' part of sociolinguistics comes into play. Your class, race, age, in-groups, out-groups, sub-cultures, and all manner of other things to do with your interactions with society and humans will all effenct what the piece means, how you 'read' it. In 1970, a young man coming back from Vietnam might have encoutered it and seen it as a Hippy expression of pacifism and either embraced it or rejected it or something in-between, but it would be read as a statement, and likely they would work to put that statement in context of their service, their country. That's valid, of course, as is the Hippy who encounters it and sees it as a call to gather for their friends, those whose idea of 'love' are expressed by that statues, at least in how they see it. The river that is Robert Indiana's *LOVE* is not static, and the way you approach it in the setting in which you approach it determines your placement of value on it, both emotionally and intellectually.

Now, let us consider that *Charging Bull* and *Fearless Girl* in New York's financial district.

Now, as I said in that other long, rambling article where I talked philosophy way over my head, you can see this piece having several layers of potential meaning, but before that, you need to understand the basic ideas. In English, a 'Bull market' is a good thing, at least for those involved in the market. This idea is important to those involved in the financial sector, which is what Wall St. and Broad St. in New York are widely involved in. The Charging Bull statue, a representation of a bull running buck wild, requires an understanding of the term 'bull market' and those that are regularly encountering it as they go to work in the area are certain to grab that pretty quick. I'm not 100% sure how many cultures use the bull as the symbol for the success of market, but many would just because English was used as the Lingua Fresca (Fresh Tongue!) of finance for so long.



Tourists became attracted to it, in much the same way they were attracted to Wall St. in general, and thus would likely have that point of reference.

Otherwise, it's just a bull runnin' around New York, which is kinda cool in and of itself. Now, before they moved *Fearless Girl* from in front of the Bull to in front of the New York Stock Exchange itself, it stood in front of the buill, a defiant look on her face, as if she was standing up and would defeat the bull. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, this is far from the only reading, and the often over-looked fact is that a brokerage actually commissioned and had *Fearless Girl* installed as a sorta promotional piece for a Gender Diversity index fund. That's neither here nor there for most who encounter it. The artist of *Charging Bull* hated that it was placed there, at least partly for the fact that he felt it was an advertising stunt. They complained enough that after a year or so, *Fearless Girl* was moved. But, the image of it standing in front of the bull is so strong that the scene of the two pieces are what I think of even all these years later.

Here it's gonna get hard.

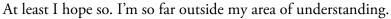
How you read Fearless Girl is based on a lot of things outside of the work. Knowledge that it was an advertising thing, at least in party, will 100% color your opinion if that matters to you and there's a HUGE kettle of worms to deal with. The idea that it is meant to express, resolute positioning in the world that doesn't want you there, perhaps, makes it a powerful work, but the funder and the strings attached to it are, of course, representitive of 'corporate feminism' or more cynically a grab at headlines to provoke conversation by pissing people off. Those people to be pissed off? Typically the idiot men-children of the type who supported the idiocy of things like GamerGate, the Puppies, and so many other attached movements. You know, those assholes. The presense of the piece was a slap at the Bull and the fact that it represented business as usual, profit as goal, always profit, only the bull is worth presenting because anything else is unacceptable. Those views are based not only on linguistic acceptances, but on social background. The interaction between the two makes a lot of statements, based on what you came to the work(s) carrying already. That is a major part of the entire thing - public art makes use of your templates at a higher, and perhaps more visceral, level than gallery art. You are not necessarily prepared for the intrusion and must put it in with the rest of your thoughts to form a new tamplate.

Now, a linguistic concept is being expressed through the name. *Fearless Girl* m is both ambiguous and determinist. We tend to apply the intention of the artist to the meaning of it, but without access to that, does it still have that same meaning? This is something that is very much a problem of much public art, though less so in gallery art. The title of the piece may not be available in Public Art, or at least not easily found. That mean that the work's meaning is more the impression it makes with the actual object than the title. That is, in a way, a preference of image over spoken/written language. A piece made of letters is the presentation of those

letters. Even if the piece is untitled, it's really *tited* untitled, or at least noted as such. With a public art piece, it may live without a title to 99% of those who encounter it, and that means that the linguistic impact is far lessened. This becomes important in my later thinking, bit it's important in general because it expresses the idea that the linguistic impact of the title may be lessened, and that may mean that the creator's intent is only what is visible on the work itself, thus forcing a more formalist reading.

OK, so let's look at something like an unreadble grafitti tag.

First of all, it's not unreadable. It's a clear act of writing and has a meaning in as much as what I'm writing right now does. Purely visual tags aren't exactly unknown, but usually, since names are easier to transfer between people than images and transfer of those ideas are key to becoming a known figure in the arena. Thus SAMO, the tag used by Basquiat and Al Diaz, was designed to spread as a name within the community they worked in. The gallery world is, largely, based on real names. SAMO in the grafitti world, would have been similar to 'Ant Farm' in the gallery (and public art) space. More abstract forms of lettering that grafitti artists employ in their tags add a layer to the actual letters. The symbol of an artist's signature is, itself, a piece of the art, and at times, the entirety of the art. The in-group people in the grafitti community of the particularly artist would almost certainly have the needed understanding of the forms used by the tagger to decipher, or more accurately to read, the name and known the connections of the tag to the tagger and to the work. That tag will have a meaning in connection to the individual, but more importly, it will serve as an in-group/out-group determiner. This is the clearest example of that distinction, and the use of lettering that eschews the conventional forms makes it a clear marker of how you can view it. That is pretty clearly sociolinguistic, right?

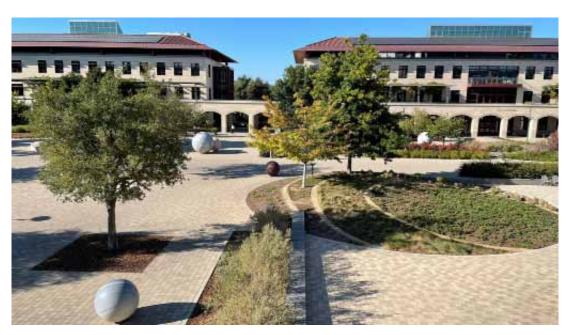








Pars pro Toto by Alicja Kwade at Stanford University Photos by David Bedno









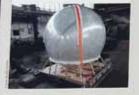








### Labor and Social nability Practices





## Alicja Kwade Pars pro Toto, 2021

Gift of the Bert and Candace Forbes Family

Pars are Tote reaches for the courses while staying grounded in the geological history of our planet.

Twelve stone globes scattered across the quad resemble a galaxy of small planets, as if the cosmos had been laid down at our feet. Each stone represents a self-contained world or universe, drawing on the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics, which suggests that all possible alternate histories and futures are real.

The positioning of the globes was determined by chance; tiny spheres were thrown onto a model of the Stanford Science and Engineering Quad to dictate placement. This gesture implies a higher being playing marbles with these planet-like spheres, creating a new universe. The arrangement also references billiard breaks, a real-world action used to visualize quantum analogues.

The natural stones come from three different continents of our Earth. The material of the stone field, with layers that have formed over billions of years, acts as a kind of timescale. Each corner of the world and layer of earth yields a multitude of stone varieties, colors, and textures so that no two stones are alike. True to the meening of the Latin phrase pors pro toto - "a part for the whole" the stones individually and collectively evoke the micro and macro scales of our existence.

- Alicja Kwade

- Stone I: WISCONTE WHITE, India
- Stone 2: CARRARA, Italy
- @ Stone 3: ALASKA RED, India
- Stone 4: VERDE GUATEMALA, India Stone 5: ROSA PORTOGALLO, Portugal
- .Store ii: HALMSTAD, Swoden
- Stone 7: FANTASY BROWN, India
- & Stone & MASI, Norway
- 6 Stone 2: RED FIRE, India
- Stone 10: MACAUBAS, Brazil \* Stone II: AMADEUS, Finland
- Stone 12: MUGLA, Turkey



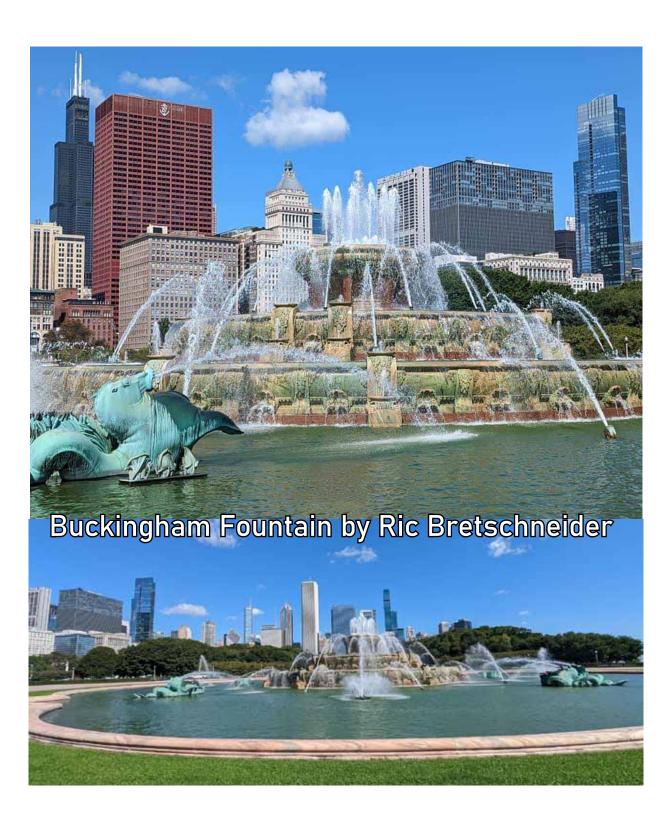


## Stories of the Stones

To learn more about the prologic Natory and characteristics of each stone, scan

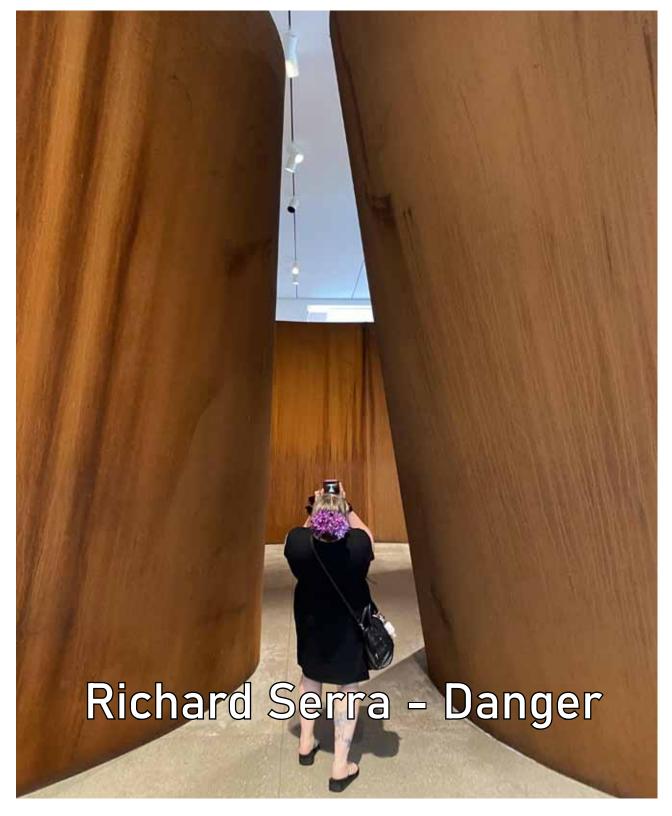
Stanford ARTS

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Quail Trail at Naranja Park,
Oro Valley, AZ
Photo by R-Laurraine Tutihasi



## Richard Serra, famous public artist, is all about danger.

His work, often steel and VERY large, is about convincing the mind that they are about to be crushed. Monumentality, leaning, stacked seemingly precariously, they're designed to make a viewer feel uneasy, which is something that a lot of artists try, but Serra does it with a much smarter trick - there's nothign else there.

For example, This pair of stacked boxes. The top one is hanging, lookign like the slightest bump could send it on to the viewers feet, right? Of course, it's welded together, but that's not what the mind comes up with first. The coloration makes it seem rusted, which is dangerous as well. It's constructed to scream at you "DO NOT TOUCH! DANGER!!!"







