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**KERRY JAMES MARSHALL**

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**Agent of Change***February 2001*

What did Sam Cooke's mother's house look like? If Mercy Dee had a sister, how did she decorate her living room? If you have a likely idea, then chances are good that you are black. Whites, especially of a certain age and class, are more often than not familiar with the songs, but not the people. If you are white, Aretha Franklin's recorded voice may hold a prominent place in the soundtrack of your life, but how often do you hang with your black neighbors, over at their house?

Kerry James Marshall paints images of those people. His "Mementos" show, first exhibited at the Renaissance Society in 1998 and traveling throughout the United States since then, takes the 1960s as its subject; collective historical memory is its obvious theme. But a different consideration of this Chicago-based artist's "Souvenir" paintings included in the show reveals a consequence of that decade and the gap between a culture and its products still felt very vividly today. Each of these domestic tableaux is based on the actual interior of one of the artist's relatives or relative's friend's houses. In representing these specific environments, Marshall renders visible the problem of being intimate with a cultural product but not its producers, of knowing a culture through its expressions but not its members.

In the wall-sized painting *Souvenir IV*, Marshall depicts an interior based on his mother-in-law's friend's living room, over which emerges a heavenly array of deceased musicians all identified in their day as "Negro" or "colored." Marshall screenprinted the names and faces of

these figures in a zone outside the perspectival space of the room, thus rendering visible the non-corporeal realm of memory. And yet this roster of black cultural greats belongs in this room—together they establish the territory of the painting's surface. By situating a black cultural memory—now in the process of mainstream canonization—within the sweep of a black living space alien to most non-black people, Marshall exposes that white people's media consumption is not a valid substitute for social interaction.

This is a significant point when one realizes that Marshall—whose work has in recent years been shown in such prestigious exhibitions as the Carnegie International, the Whitney Biennial, and documenta X—chooses to reside and make art in the Third Ward on Chicago's South Side, in what many would say is the heart of the near south ghetto. The specificity of indigence and segregation to this location is an essential consideration in drawing a thread of continuity between this place where he lives and Marshall's artistic and pedagogical practice. (Marshall is a tenured faculty member at the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago.)

Marshall's commitment to a skill-based foundation accounts for his varied early works on paper, canvas, and board, using collage, charcoal, tempera, woodcut, and acrylics. As a whole, these works stand as a record of Marshall's earnest pursuit of mastering the manipulation of materials. At the same time as he honed his painterly skills, Marshall also laid the groundwork for what has become a sort of personal hallmark: the image of the jet-black figure. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Shadow of His Former Self* from 1980, in which Marshall paints a figure almost too dark to be seen but flashing a gap toothed Cheshire cat grin, predicts by a decade the powerful use of non-valorized black figures by artists such as Thom Shaw and Kara Walker. And by enunciating his racial identity as a given, Marshall clears a path toward conceptual and art-historical concerns early on, rather than dwelling on narrowly autobiographical narratives.

Marshall's rejection of the strictly autobiographical means that he has chosen to dispense with the artist as storyteller in favor of the artist as critic, theorist, and historian. The resultant seriousness of inquiry has allowed him to work in representational styles not historically associated with the narratives of any marginalized population. In fact, much of his output aims for a stylistic position updating that most hallowed of visual traditions, the painting of the pre- and early Modern European masters. It may be that only an artist with Marshall's seemingly

contradictory commitments to an unflinching investigation into the sociopolitical conditions of black American life, on the one hand, and to a painterly prowess in the Western vein, on the other, can make paintings in the classical traditions vital. It is apparent that what is conventionally thought of as the art world's indifference or even hostility to the artist of color has not stopped Marshall from inserting himself into the European representational lineage, and thereby extending it.

A typical example is the mural-sized *Bang* from 1994, in which Marshall scrambles religious motifs, dramatic historical themes, and pastoral ideals of different classical genres into a starkly melancholy view of twentieth century American secular faith. In the painting, three staid children mournfully conduct what seems to be an impromptu pledge to a flaccidly draped American flag. They stand in a backyard complete with garden hose, barbecue grill, and white picket fence, but whose idealization is marred by streaks and gestural splotches of paint. The image effectively links middle-class aspirations to national rituals and to segregated realities. The group of paintings from 1994 and 1995 known as the "Garden Project" continue these investigations. Titled after public housing projects that have "Garden" in their names, the group consists of epic paintings that present an amalgam of classical elements, mixing Renaissance composition with pastoral themes and Mannerist detail. The overt classical vocabulary in each painting is proportionally balanced by Postmodern elements, including the foregrounding of one or several super-dark figures, and perhaps chiefly, the public housing projects themselves as setting and subject. The overlaid, obviously Modernistic drips and gestural strokes not only complete the nearly encyclopedic painter's lexicon Marshall employs in these works, but also blunt attempts to force the work into Socialist Realism, except, again, by enlivening and extending that category.

Stateway Gardens and Wentworth Gardens—two of the housing projects pictured in the "Garden Project"—are a short walk from Marshall's studio. But the projects are only half the story of this part of town. The "interaction" between races on the South Side of Chicago can be described by a term that only now, decades after the population movement reached its fever pitch, can be used without evoking a torrent of fear, guilt, and sadness: white flight. This demographic shift left to black people vast tracts of the city—neighborhoods later made known to the white mainstream through the nightly news, to the liberal white elite through social science, and to neither through actual contact.

If there is a linchpin to the narrative of modern urban segregation, it must be education. Education, as the nation eternally intonates in unison, is a ticket out of the ghetto. And yet underfunding and mismanagement of urban school systems have become the clearest example of institutional failure and inequality in the United States. Ask Marshall about deficiencies in the educational experience and he'll launch into the usual litany of woes: students can't read well, can't write at all, can't think, and lack a host of fundamental skills. All of these are predictably understood as problems, except for one thing: he is not talking just about the grade schools several blocks from his studio which serve an impoverished black neighborhood—he's also talking about undergraduate universities and graduate art education and the privileged class of students these programs serve.

For Marshall, the integral continuity between the two worlds he inhabits—art schools and inner-city environments—is that both suffer from an absence of expected excellence. That this should be the case when history abounds with exemplary models of behavior challenges Marshall to formulate a practice through which he can articulate a politics of excellence.

In one of a set of murals done for the hallways of a middle school in Chicago in 1994, his assertion of excellence takes the straightforward form of celebrating Frederick Douglass as an exemplar of self-educated black American power. As someone who literally had to beg, borrow, and steal his education, and then wielded it against the system that would keep him enslaved, Douglass represents that combination of elements Marshall finds so lacking in both academia and the social universe outside his studio: a powerful imagination wedded to practical self-discipline. Moreover, judging from our conversations, Marshall's notion of excellence consists fundamentally of a strong work ethic. The high quality of an artist's technical skills, understanding art history, and critical thinking will all follow his or her refusal to cut corners.

As part of the "Mementos" exhibit, the "We Mourn Our Loss" paintings reach an art world audience different from neighborhood middle-school students, but can be interpreted similarly. Composed of images of the modern-day trinity of Martin Luther King and the Kennedy brothers in differing arrangements against flat dark backgrounds along with the solemn words "We Mourn Our Loss," the series historicizes a remembrance that has become so important to the generation of black Americans who lived through the Civil Rights era as to have become emblematic.

Marshall, however recalls the three figures as symbols not only of an idealism lost, but, just as importantly, of an ability to meet the challenges of circumstances, to excel despite political obstacles and personal flaws, and to inspire others to commit their own acts of greatness.

In an age in which the demonized liberal and the ultra-cynical conservative define the poles of the political spectrum, Marshall's message takes on added resonance and depth. He insists that the impulse and ability to change the world arises most powerfully from a will to excellence. Paradoxically, it may be the marginalized who are best positioned to advance new standards of excellence, since they have the most to gain in a changed world.

Marshall's work speaks the language of contemporary art confidently, having lately moved into video, sculpture, and installation. It also amplifies two long-standing black traditions. The first is politicized self-reliance, the icons of which range from Marcus Garvey to the Black Panthers. Interestingly, Marshall's unique contribution to this legacy is the generalized application of a peculiarity belonging to the art world: the anticipation of critique. To give one case, in his suite of five "Black Power" prints from 1998 Marshall enlarges the subject of critique to include the strategic orientation of the Black Power movement itself, and not simply the objects that make up the suite. Each piece bears a dated slogan such as "Black is Beautiful" or "By Any Means Necessary" simply printed in block letters in quotation marks but without other adornment, thereby memorializing a crucial chapter of struggle without erasing the movement's flaws. Just as artists anticipate critical reception from friendly audiences, these prints suggest that partisans likewise ought to interrogate the strategies of their own political movements and histories, and remove the blockages that prevent self-critique. The strikingly neutral presentation of such once-incendiary expressions sufficiently reopens critical reassessment of, for example, the Black Panther Party. As he travels parallel socioeconomic spheres both suffering from normalized underachievement, it is the kind of ethic—an independence that takes responsibility for its own self-reflection and dispenses with blind loyalties (whether political or aesthetic)—that Marshall seeks to instill in young people.

The second black aesthetic tradition employed by Marshall is that of the artistic imaginary: from Sun Ra to DJ Spooky, black artists have always used available linguistic and technological tools to project into the sci-fi future, to envision a changed world. One of Marshall's current

ventures fits right into this strain of black culture. He's developing a comic strip called *Rythm Mastr*, in which his twin concerns of art history and urban black society continue in a futuristic setting with the added layer of narrative development over time. As with his painting, in which he masters the language of the canonized traditions in order to spotlight the deficiencies of those same traditions, Marshall began this enterprise with his own learning process. A dozen or more books about animation, cartoons, and comics sit near his drawing tables and on his shelves. After researching the medium, Marshall put time-tested comic book devices such as the unlikely superhero and the dramatic visual sequence to work telling the story of a crew of young black people discovering superhuman powers in a not-so-imaginary time of social distress. The result is an apocalyptic world filled with lots of fine and popular art-historical references and a hip-hop sensibility.


*Rythm Mastr* is the latest example of Marshall's artistic and educational philosophies in action: he works to possess a knowledge of art-historical precedent (in this case, the popular art of cartooning), a command of materials, and the ability to gauge one against the other in the course of producing a work of art. In combination, these skills allow Marshall to rightfully claim status as an agent of change within the field. This level of empowerment is also the goal he sets for his students, and a model which he hopes to present to those of his inner-city neighborhood.

Already having had a limited run in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* as an extension of his contribution to the 1999 Carnegie International, and with future comic-book installments forthcoming, *Rythm Mastr* promises to solidify the bridge between Marshall's worlds in mass-media form, and will undoubtedly question the established reach of the art world. As always, for Marshall, the quality of the product will determine the potency of its questioning.



# STRUGGLES AT HAYMARKET: AN EMBATTLED HISTORY OF STATIC MONUMENTS AND PUBLIC INTERVENTIONS

## NICOLAS LAMPERT



On May 4th, 1927, a Chicago streetcar driver rumbled down Randolph Street. The driver had routinely passed by the Police Monument, the daunting statue of a policeman that had commemorated the Haymarket Riot solely from the perspective of the police. The monument had originally stood in Haymarket Square, the site of the riot, but due to congested traffic, it was moved by the city to Union Park, between Randolph and Ogden. Its new location did not calm the discontent that much of the public felt towards the statue, which was situated within a city with a strong working-class identity. It had been vandalized before, but anger towards it was about to be taken to a new level. Veering from his normal route, the driver suddenly jumped the tracks and directed his streetcar full speed ahead into the base of the monument, knocking the statue to the ground. The driver, whose name is only referenced in historical accounts as O'Neil, gave a simple reason: he was sick of seeing that policeman with his arm raised.<sup>1</sup>

In 1927 the memory of Haymarket still registered with much of the US public, yet as the decades passed, it began to fade, even within Chicago. The distance of time, the failure of schools to teach its history, and a concerted effort by the Chicago and the federal governments to erase its presence from public space all added to its steady disappearance, with consequences for future generations. For this erasure of Haymarket's history is part of a large pattern of leaving the public uninformed about its own labor history. Basic notions ranging from a shorter work week, to the existence of a weekend and child

labor laws are now taken for granted, and are not understood as past struggles that were once fought for and won by radical and working-class movements. Negating these past histories also de-emphasizes the essential issue of class. Although it permeates every level of society, rarely does the concept of a class-based society become a topic of focus in American political and cultural life. Looking at the history of Haymarket shatters the notion of an equal society and informs us of the massive levels of class war and discontent that took place during the late 1880s. This type of historical awareness is a key reminder that we still live in a society that continues to be deeply divided by class. The actions of the past stand as inspiring, yet unfinished movements to continue to build upon and to adapt to present conditions. This multifaceted struggle also embraces the issue of public space and the contentious struggle over whose history is presented and whose is not, which is the central storyline of the Haymarket monuments.

### Haymarket As Unresolved History

Historically, the events at Haymarket in 1886 grew out of the international eight-hour workday movement. On May 1st, Chicago was just one of many cities that participated in a national strike for the eight-hour day. The Chicago protest was massive and drew over 80,000 marchers in a parade up Michigan Avenue. At the same time, solidarity strikes were occurring throughout the city. At the McCormick Harvester Works, on the South Side of the city, trouble broke out during a skirmish between striking workers and replacement scabs. 1,400 workers had been on strike since mid-February and tensions were running high against

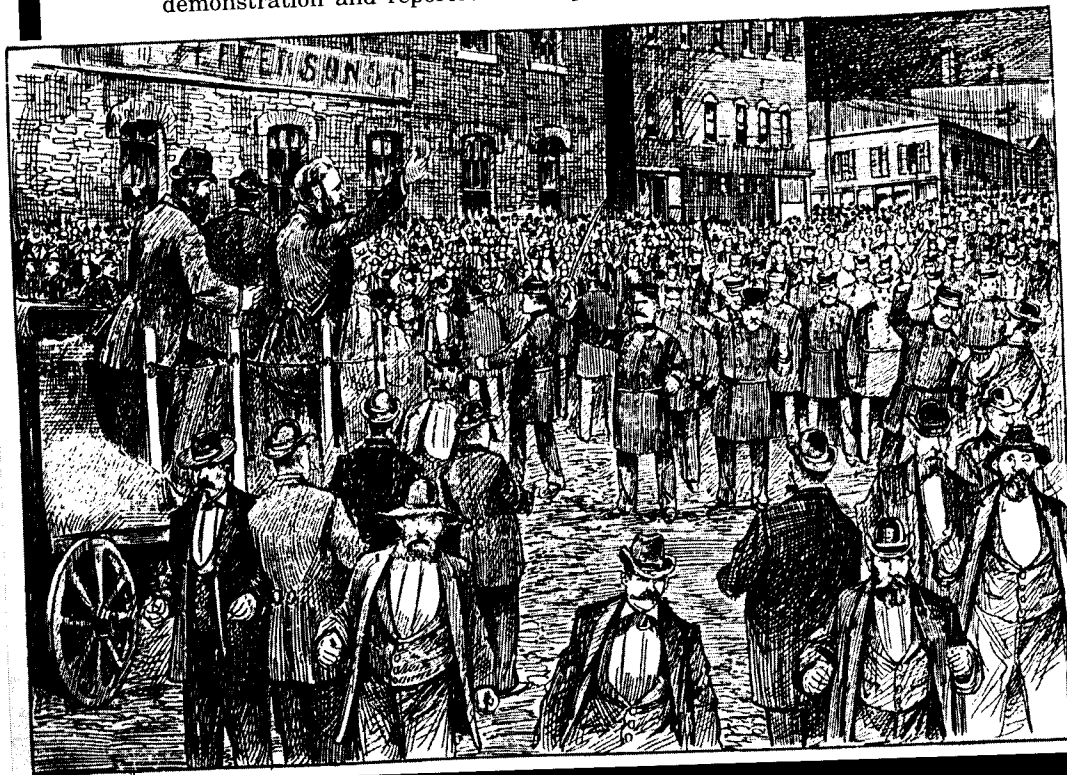


the 300 strikebreakers who had crossed picket lines. On May 3rd, 200 police were called in to break up the skirmishes. The police opened fire on the strikers, killing four and wounding many others. August Spies, one of the prominent anarchist leaders in the city, had been addressing strikers at another plant just down the road when the massacre took place. Outraged, he rushed to the printers and issued a flyer that began with the inflammatory headline, "Revenge! Workingmen, to Arms!!!" A second flyer called for a protest demonstration the next day (May 4th) at Haymarket Square.

At this demonstration, Spies spoke to a crowd of 3,000, as did Albert Parsons, the editor of the largest anarchist newspaper in the country, *The Alarm*. Chicago was the epicenter of the anarchist movement in the US—a highly organized radical movement whose most prominent leaders addressed massive labor rallies and agitated on behalf of many of the poor, the unemployed, and immigrants within the city. At Haymarket Square, Spies, Parsons, and others denounced the police violence from the day before. Mayor Carter Harrison showed up at the demonstration and reported to the police that the

event was orderly and headed home for the evening. By 10 p.m., two-thirds of the crowd had left as rain began to fall. The event likely would have wound down without incident, but the police decided to show up in force with 180 officers marching toward the crowd demanding that it disperse. This type of police intimidation almost always exacerbates the situation; it's a rash tactic where one can likely count on police clubs descending down on people's heads, general panic and a host of unnecessary arrests. Yet something far more chaotic and deadly occurred as the police entered the crowd. A person, whose identity remains unknown to this day, threw a bomb in to the crowd of charging policemen. Was it thrown by a worker seeking revenge for the police violence from the day before? Was it an agent provocateur willing to use violence to disrupt the gains made by the labor movement? 120 years later, no one can say for certain. However, we do know that during the mayhem of the blast, police fired at will, killing many, including fellow officers. At least eight policemen died from the explosion and the spray of bullets and over 200 civilians were injured, including an uncounted number of deaths.

The ramifications of the blast would be profound. The police utilized the event to attack organized labor by shutting down their newspapers and arresting hundreds of individuals, essentially crushing the anarchist movement within Chicago. Throughout the city, as well as in many other regions of the country, immigrant populations were looked upon suspiciously and seen as trying to destroy the fabric of American society. Eventually, eight anarchists (the majority of whom were German immigrants) were brought to trial, including some who were not even pres-



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ent at the demonstration. The press focused its attention on Chicago and the trial, and much of the world watched in shock as the defendants were found guilty, and then four hung on November 11th, 1887—a date that became known as “Black Friday.” August Spies, Albert Parsons, Louis Lingg, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Michael Schwab, and Samuel Fielden had been sentenced to death on August 20 in a grossly unjust trial. Oscar Neebe was sentenced to fifteen years. Lingg would commit suicide in jail on November 10, while Schwab and Fielden had their sentences commuted that day to life. Even before the executions, all eight had become martyrs to radical labor and social movements throughout the world. Their memory was kept alive by many, including artists who created poems, songs, prints, and paintings to celebrate their lives. Yet in Chicago, the battle over the martyrs’ memory, particularly over the building of monuments that addressed Haymarket, would be bitterly contested.<sup>2</sup>

#### Taking Sides: The Police Monument and the Haymarket Monument

Since 1886, organized labor, anarchists, and the police have clashed over opposing visions about how the Haymarket Tragedy should be remembered. Unions and labor historians have largely come to view Haymarket as part of the overall struggle for the eight-hour day and workers’ rights, and have distanced themselves from the radical anarchist principles that the martyrs had called for in the late 1800s. Spies, Parsons and others had agitated for a collective society to replace capitalism and private property. They viewed the US government as a hostile entity that perpetuated a society based on inequality and a class system. Their call for a radical restructuring of society runs counter to the modern labor movement. Most modern unions seek to change very few systemic political or cultural elements within the US, viewing the government, instead, as a structure one can operate within and lobby for better working conditions.

The labor movement has long since argued that an official monument should exist at Haymarket that represents the history and concerns of workers from a vast range of professions and political viewpoints. Many anarchists, however, have argued that

the martyrs who died for their convictions would abhor any type of official monument that was sanctioned by the government. In the attempt to safeguard the memory and the ideals of the martyrs, anarchists today have often insisted that a monument that distorts the martyrs’ memory is equal to a second death.

The police, on the other hand, looked at Haymarket through a different lens. To many police officers, Haymarket is remembered simply as the event during which an anarchist-led labor movement murdered their fellow police officers. In their view, if a monument should exist at the site where the bomb exploded, it should honor the police officers that died. Any type of tribute to the anarchists would be a bitter insult. For over a hundred years, the viewpoint favored by the police held sway in Chicago. Haymarket Square either featured a monument to the police or it remained bare without any notice of what had transpired. Labor and anarchists were completely barred from placing a monument representing their perspective of the Haymarket riot within city limits.

Anarchists responded to this ban by erecting a monument in 1893 in the nearby suburb of Waldheim (now Forest Park), at the Waldhiem (Forest Home) Cemetery—the gravesite of the executed martyrs. The Pioneer Aid and Support Association, an anarchist group that provided aid for the widows and the offspring of those executed and jailed following the Haymarket trial organized the monument campaign. Albert Weinert was selected to sculpt the Haymarket Monument, and in his design he depicted an allegorical figure of Justice placing a laurel wreath over the head of a dying worker. The female figure (also interpreted as Liberty, Anarchy, or Revolution) looks towards the distance with an intense gaze, and is portrayed as a protector of working class people.

The powerful monument would quickly become a focal point for the ceremonies of working class people and radical movements starting with its dedication on June 25, 1893. The date happened to coincide with the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which allowed thousands of visitors in town from places around the world to attend the unveiling of the monument. Historian James Green explains the importance of the ceremony, along with

the city's effort to neutralize its impact:

The martyrs' families and supporters ritualized the act of remembering and began to do so immediately with a funeral many witnesses would never forget. After struggling with city officials who prohibited red flags and banned revolutionary songs, the anarchists led a large parade silently through Chicago's working-class neighborhoods on the long walk to Chicago's Waldheim Cemetery...<sup>3</sup>

Over 3,000 people marched in the parade and 8,000 were present at the cemetery during the dedication. August Spies' final words before he was hung were chiseled on the base of the monument: "The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today."

The day after the ceremony, Governor John Peter Altgeld pardoned the three men who remained in jail. He knew this action would ruin his political career, but Altgeld stood by his convictions, stating that the trial was a travesty of justice. His pardon would later be inscribed on the back of the monument. For his action, he was scorned by the power structure, but celebrated by labor, who tried in vain to have a monument built to him at Haymarket Square. But like the martyrs' monument, the city of Chicago would refuse.

In the years to come, the Haymarket Monument at the Waldheim Cemetery would continue to act as a symbol of resistance and sacred ground to the radical labor movement. The defiant monument has often been the site for May Day celebrations

and remembrances of May 4th and November 11th. Likewise, the cemetery would become a burial ground to many of the country's most radical labor leaders and revolutionaries who desired to be buried in close proximity to the Haymarket martyrs. Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Joe Hill, Big Bill Haywood, and many others would either be buried there or have their ashes spread in the cemetery.

In comparison, the Police Monument, sculpted by Johannes Gelert, was dedicated in 1889, four years before the monument at Waldheim. It also had annual remembrance celebrations and was cherished by those it represented, the police. The *Chicago Tribune* and the Union League Club of Chicago had organized the fundraising drive for the monument, which was to be placed in the center of Haymarket Square, a working class section of town, home to farmers' markets and numerous union halls.<sup>4</sup> The placement of the monument, depicting a police officer with his hand raised in a "halt" pose was an overt message to the people of Chicago that if they rebelled and organized strikes, there would be consequences. While the monument of the police officer honored the officers who had fallen, it also proclaimed the distorted message to the public that the police had protected the city from the disruptive forces of the labor movement and the anarchists. It was fitting that the owner of the *Chicago Tribune*, Cyrus McCormick, also owned McCormick Harvester Works, where the police killings had led to the May 4th demonstration at Haymarket. Throughout the entire process of conceptualizing a police monument, the *Chicago Tribune* never hid its hatred for the anarchist movement. The paper's red-baiting tactics against anarchism and disdain for the radical politics of newly arrived Bohemian and German immigrant populations had helped ensure that a fair trial would be absent, leading to the guilty sentences and the executions.

It was no wonder that the monument received little fanfare from working people—the majority of the population in Chicago. After the Police Monument was first toppled in 1927, it was moved away from the streetcar lanes so renegade drivers could not destroy it so easily. Eventually it was moved to Jackson Boulevard, where it was ironically placed facing a statue of Mayor Carter

1. William J. Adelman. "The True Story Behind the Haymarket Police Statue." In *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1986), 168.

2. For historical information on Haymarket, see: Avrich, Paul. *The Haymarket Tragedy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Roediger and Rosemont, ed. *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 1986; Green, James. *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006); Nelson, Bruce C. *Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988).

3. Green, James. *Taking History to Heart: The Power of the Past in Building Social Movements*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 129.

4. The Union League Club of Chicago (an exclusive club whose membership was limited only to European-American men through the mid-point of the twentieth century) was first established in 1879 and played a key role in establishing many of the city's elite cultural organizations and events, including helping to fund The Art Institute of Chicago, Orchestra Hall, The Field Museum, and the World's Columbian Exposition to Chicago in 1893. See: Nowlan, James D., *Glory, Darkness, Light: A History of the Union League Club of Chicago*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004).

5. Adelman. *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 168.

6. "Police Groups Angered Over Haymarket Statue Bombing." *Chicago Tribune*, 8 October, 1969.

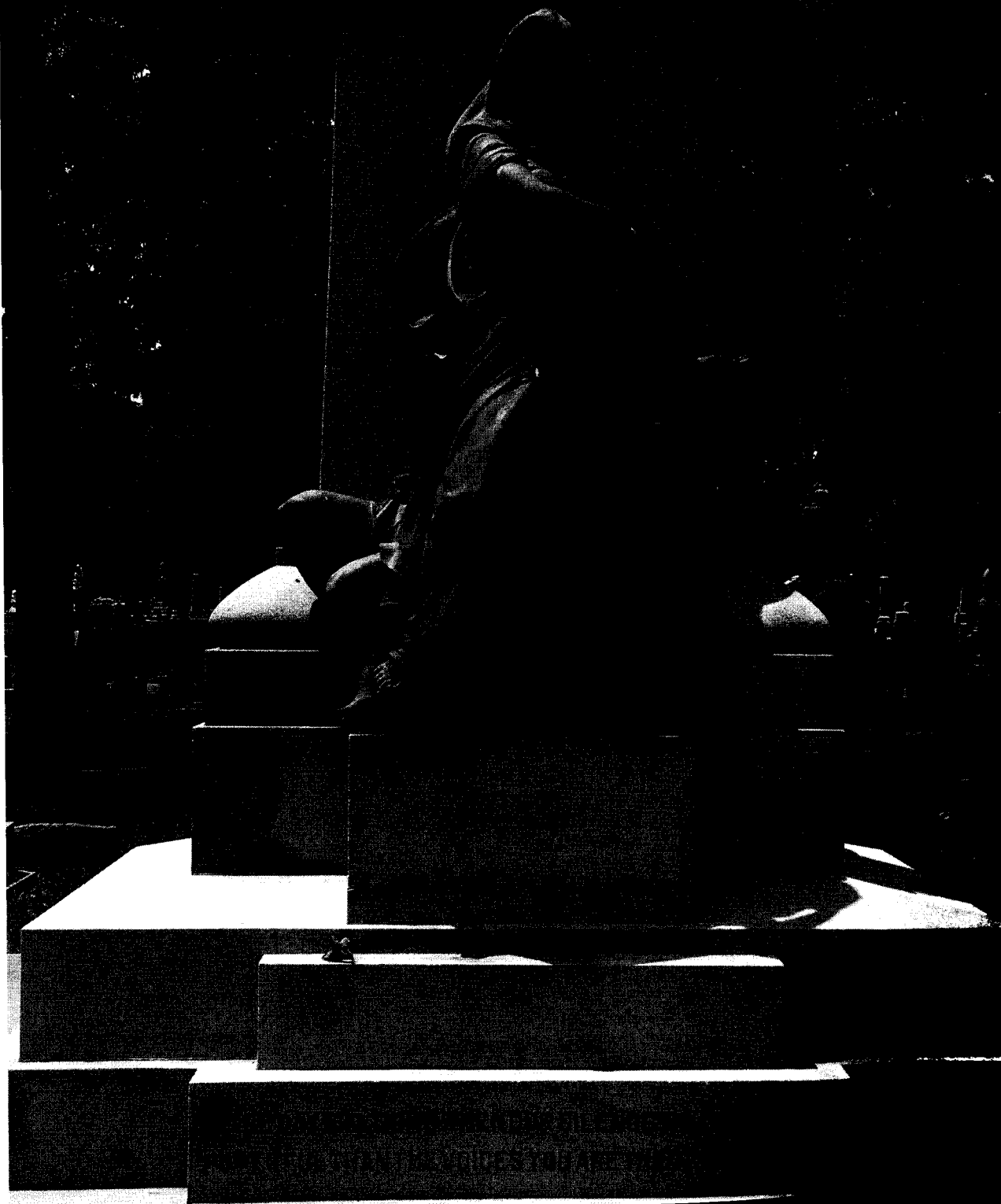
7. "Daley Asks for Law, Order at Haymarket." *Chicago Tribune*, 5 May 1970.

8. Harry Golden Jr., "We'll Rebuild Statue: Daley." *Chicago Sun-Times*, 6 October 1970.

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Haymarket Monument at Waldheim (c. 2006). Photo: Nicolas Lampert.

Kehben Grifter, *Remember the Haymarket Anarchists*, hand-cut stone mosaic installed at the Haymarket site, 1996. Photo: Kehben Grifter.

Harrison, who had once testified against police corruption.<sup>5</sup> The two figures stared at each other, engaged in a silent dialogue.

In 1956 the Police Monument was moved once again, and returned to the Haymarket area, situated 200 feet west from its original location. The Chicago Police Department had lobbied for the monument to be moved back to Haymarket Square, but by the 1950s a new disruptive force—the construction of the Kennedy Expressway—had carved up the downtown neighborhood and the historical essence of the original site. Set amongst high-rise buildings (themselves monuments to capitalism) the monument rested on a special platform overlooking the freeway, situated on the north side of Randolph Street, a block west of Desplaines. On May 5th, 1965, the city council designated the monument a historical landmark, but this designation meant little to those set to start a new wave of attacks. The Police Monument soon fell prey to 1960s radicalism.

On October 6th, 1969 Weatherman, a radical, underground splinter of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) stuck dynamite between the monument statue's legs and detonated it, sending the legs flying onto the freeway below.

Although Weatherman had yet to make a statement, Sgt. Richard Barrett, president of the Chicago Police Sergeants association, directed the blame towards SDS. In a statement, Sgt. Barrett (who was later reprimanded by his Superintendent) stated:

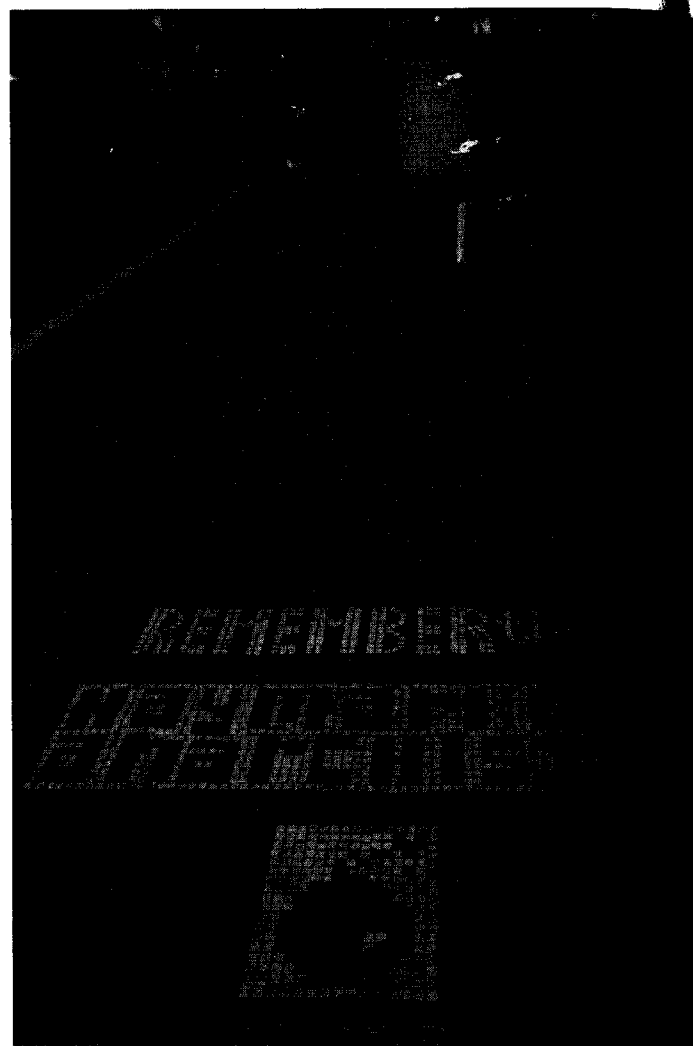
The blowing up of the only police monument in the United States by the anarchists... is an obvious declaration of war between the police and the SDS and other anarchist groups. We feel that it is kill or be killed regardless of the Jay Millers [director of the Illinois ACLU], Daniel Walkers [author of a federal report that blamed the police for the rioting during the Democratic National Convention], and the so-called civil rights acts.<sup>6</sup>

In the midst of this tension between the police and anarchists, Mayor Richard J. Daley ordered that the monument be rebuilt. In his statements to the press, he asked for private donors to help with the costs and eventually received funds from many, including the International Brothers of Teamsters and a number of other unions. The statue was

rededicated on May 4th, 1970—the anniversary of the Haymarket riot. At the dedication ceremony, Daley told the crowd:

This is the only statue of a policeman in the world. The policeman is not perfect, but he is as fine an individual as any other citizen. Let the younger generation know that the policeman is their friend, and to those who want to take law into their own hands, let them know that we won't tolerate it.<sup>7</sup>

Weatherman apparently ignored Daley's threat because on October 6th, 1970, exactly one year after they first toppled the monument, they blew it up again. This time the press received a call shortly after the blast from a Weatherman stating, "We



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an stating, "We

destroyed the Haymarket Square Statue for the second year in a row in honor of our brothers and sisters in the New York Prisons..."<sup>8</sup>

In what was clearly becoming a battle of sheer will and determination between the two sides, Daley ordered round-the-clock police security to protect the statue at a pricetag of \$67,440 per year. The media ridiculed the twenty-four hour guard, noting that there were more important matters for the police to attend to. This dilemma generated a series of imaginative and incredibly humorous ideas on how to protect the bewildered monument. Some of the ideas thrown about included placing a large plastic dome over the monument or casting a series of disposable fiberglass police statues. According to this logic, each time the monument was blown up, it could easily be replaced.<sup>9</sup> None of these proposals came to fruition as Daley ultimately insisted that the monument stay true to its original form.

Realizing that it was inevitable that the monument would continue to be attacked as long as it remained in Haymarket Square, the Police Monument was moved in February of 1972 to a new location, inside the lobby of Central Police Headquarters on 11th and State Street. Yet this move proved to be temporary, and in 1976, it was moved again and placed within the courtyard of the Police Academy at 1300 W. Jackson, where it resides today. At this location, it is completely removed from the public sight and one needs a visitor's pass to even view it. However, the massive concrete base for the monument remained at Randolph Street for two more decades, acting as a visual reminder of how contested the space had been and continued to be.

### The Temporary Monument: Public Interventions 1972–2004

I really don't trust monuments<sup>10</sup>  
—Michael Piazza

The lack of a monument at Haymarket from 1972 to 2004 did not mean that the site was any less contested or active. For some, the empty site presented a opening to insert one's own perspective within public space. A monument, by its nature, is already defined, static, and rarely allows for participation.<sup>11</sup> A monument may allow for critique, for the viewer

to respond to it, but it does not allow one to take an active role in adding to the dialogue and asserting one's voice into the landscape unless, of course, one does something drastic. In this manner, monuments often define a singular point of view that shuts out other perspectives. The lack of a statue at Haymarket, however, allowed for multiple perspectives through ephemeral monuments—temporary actions, performances, and other types of decentralized public interventions that many individuals and groups used to assert different "unofficial" versions of the Haymarket history into the physical space and collective memory. These actions, lacking any type of permission or government role, are in many regards much more closely aligned to the ideals of the Haymarket martyrs—they embrace autonomy and direct action.

At each of the locations significant to Haymarket—the Square, the location of the Police

Monument, the Haymarket Monument at Waldheim, and McCormick Harvester Works—a multitude of separate actions, performances, guerilla landmarks and other types of public interventions have taken place over the years. The vast majority of these are divorced from one another, existing primarily in the memory of those who participated or those who happened to witness the ephemeral action. At times, a physical reminder would remain, perhaps graffiti or the remnants of a temporary monument. More than likely, only the documentation of the action would inform others of its existence.

One of the more recent creative actions took place in 1996 right before the Democratic National Convention that was held in Chicago. Kehben Grifter

9. Adelman. *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 168.

10. Nicolas Lampert, "Public Memories of Haymarket in Chicago: Michael Piazza Interviewed by Nicolas Lampert," *AREA* #2 (2006): 9.

11. Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Washington DC) and Civil Rights Memorial (Montgomery, Alabama) counter this notion by encouraging the public to interact with the monument, often by touching the surface. As well, Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz Monument Against Fascism, War and Violence—and for Peace and Human Rights (Harburg, Germany) invites the viewer to take an active role by carving words and marks into the surface of the monument.

12. The *Chicago Tribune* article featured quotes from Evan Glassman (a person Grifter was working with on a tile mosaic commission for a restaurant in Chicago at the time), who claimed in the article that he was the one who created and installed the mosaic—with Grifter as an "accomplice" who helped him with his project. However, in conversations that I have had with Grifter, she notes that the information that Glassman provided to the newspaper reporter was misleading and spiteful. Instead it was she who initiated the project, created the mosaic, and set it in the concrete. See: Blair Kamin, "Mystery Solved: Mosaic Artist Raises a Flag in Protest." *Chicago Tribune*, 13 August, 1996, 8.

For more information on Kehben Grifter's work with the Beehive Design Collective visit: [www.beehivecollective.org](http://www.beehivecollective.org)

13. "Public Memories of Haymarket in Chicago: Michael Piazza Interviewed by Nicolas Lampert," *AREA* #2 (2006): 7.

Haymarket 8-Hour Action Series, 2002, from left: Hay! Market Research Group (Lauren Cumbia, Dara Greenwald and Blithe Riley); John Pitman Weber's reenactment of a Eugene Debs speech; Javier Lara and students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago hold a sewing bee and create a large orange circle that marks the location of the former Police Monument. Photos: Michael Piazza.

(who works with the artist/activist Beehive Design Collective) created a small hand-cut stone mosaic to the anarchist martyrs and installed it within the sidewalk at the Haymarket site, without attempting to go through any official means of permission. At the time Grifter was working near the Haymarket site and noticed that the sidewalks were being redone, the wet cement in the process of drying, creating the perfect opportunity to install the mosaic. However, when she went to place the piece, she was spotted by city workers and questioned. Grifter quickly talked her way out of trouble by citing names in the city bureaucracy and falsely stating that the project had been given city approval. To verify her claims, the workers called their superior and described the mosaic and its content. Just her luck, the city official did not comprehend the illicit nature of the project, nor did he understand the mosaic's message or the significance of the Haymarket site. Better yet, the official insisted that the workers on site install the mosaic for her! For five weeks it remained at the Haymarket site and would likely have lasted longer had not a *Chicago Tribune* article brought attention to the mosaic, prompting the city to remove it.<sup>12</sup>

The pedestal of the Police Monument was also removed in 1996, right before the Democratic National Convention. The city must have also realized how inviting the site was and more than likely feared what would take place, anticipating a large amount of demonstrators. To many, the removal of the pedestal was a great loss, for it represented just how contested the history over the Police Monument had been and served as a grand stage for performances and other public

interventions. However, when the cement slab was removed, it left a giant eighteen-foot diameter circle, clearly marking where the monument once stood. Although not as preferable as the pedestal, the circle still served as a stage.

Michael Piazza, a Chicago artist, utilized the location of the circle for a group project that he initiated in 2002 called the *Haymarket 8-Hour Action Series*. The year prior, Piazza got the idea for a series of performances after he saw the Chicago printmaker, René Arceo, perform an action on the circle during a May Day celebration. Arceo's performance was simple but poignant. He pulled up in a car, ran up, and started stomping on the circle as a crowd watched. Piazza's tribute to the "Arceo Stomp" involved putting out a call inviting other artists to do separate eight-hour actions at the site. Piazza notes that:

Ever since 1986, I had been monitoring this blank pedestal and I realized that there was a division between a small group of people in town who knew what it represented, who had this local knowledge and memory, while there was a whole other group who just thought it was an empty pedestal. That always fascinated me.<sup>13</sup>

Piazza reasoned that artists, with their talents and creativity, could reclaim this history and make it more visible. Piazza surveyed the site and measured the diameter of the circle but before he put out the artist call, the city, either intentionally or coincidentally, paved over the circle, leaving no physical evidence of where the Police Monument once stood. Undeterred, the first project of the *8-Hour Action Series* involved Javier Lara and students from the School of the Art Institute who held a sewing bee at the site and constructed a large orange circle that became a





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visual reminder of the monument's existence. In other performances, the circle served as a stage for a number of soapbox presentations, including William Adelman's historical presentation on Haymarket and John Pitman Weber's reenactment of a Eugene Debs speech.

Other performances that were part of Piazza's *8-Hour Action Series* used the circle as an end point. Larry Bogad did a project entitled, "The Police Statue Returns" for which he created a giant puppet that resembled the original police statue. In the performance, Bogad paraded the puppet along from the Daley Center, through downtown and eventually ending on Randolph Street. At the former location of the Police Monument, a large anarchist flag was placed over the circle in an act of reclamation. This type of creative street performance, unregulated and spontaneous, has an intrinsic beauty to it. Not only does it catch the public off guard, disrupting business as usual, but these types of actions, due to their atypical nature, encourage people to think and question not only their own daily routine, but the daily routine of the city's functions. In actions such as these, artists present other possibilities.

Likewise, Bogad's performance, either intentionally or inadvertently, touched upon a sense of nostalgia for the Police Monument—a seemingly contradictory desire for the monument to still remain near to the Haymarket site. Although his piece critiques the former monument, its brief "return," even as a puppet, reminds one of a time when the lines were more clearly defined. The Police Monument, with its authoritarian message, was such an obvious target that it became the perfect place to vent frustrations and to engage in symbolic acts of class struggle. Its removal obscured the issues and the subsequent removal of the monument's pedestal was akin to erasure, a means of publicly forgetting that any type of struggle had taken place at the site.

Another *8-Hour Action Series* project that spoke of the changing dynamics within Chicago was the "Hay! Market Research Group," a collaborative action by Lauren Cumbia, Dara Greenwald, and Blithe Riley. During the action, the group set up a table and a sign on Randolph Street at the location of the former Police Monument. The sign acted as a visual component, similar to a billboard, that first

caught people's attention. Various slogans on the sign were interchanged, including: "What Happened Here in 1886?," "Guilt by Association: Who Died for Your Eight-Hour Workday?," "4 Hung, 1 Suicide, 3 Pardons," and "Public Hanging, Lethal Injection, Indifference?" Once people walked up to the information table, they could fill out surveys on Haymarket and issues that were connected to the present. The vital importance of the piece was utilizing art and street performances to get strangers to engage with one another in conversations about meaningful issues and histories that are not well known.

In nearly every intervention, the artists involved were responding to far more than just the Haymarket history. These actions responded to the entire city landscape and the culture at large. For some of these performances, Haymarket was simply a starting point. Brian Dortmund's project for the *8-Hour Action* was a May Day bike ride that traveled from Haymarket to the Waldheim Cemetery. In subsequent years, Dortmund continues to do the ride, but changes the route, so that the riders travel to different locations in the Chicago vicinity that are

specific to labor and other radical struggles. In this manner, those who participated in the action formed a community, learned about various histories, engaged in dialogue, and had a shared experience. Sarah Kanouse, an artist and writer who took part in the bike rides, reflected upon the larger framework of the actions:

Impermanent memorial events like political rallies, bike ride, pilgrimages, and picnics are new ways of inhabiting both the city and history... These events are not so much tours or lectures, with the implication of an omniscient guide, as encounters in which leadership is fluid and fleeting if it must be present at all.<sup>14</sup>

14. Sarah E. Kanouse, conference paper, "When Our Silence Will Be More Powerful: Haymarket's Ephemeral Memorials," 8 at: <http://readysubjects.org/writing.html>, March 3, 2006.

15. Ibid., 14.

16. Stephen Kinzer, "In Chicago, a Deliberately Ambiguous Memorial to an Attack's Complex Legacy," *New York Times*, 15 September 2004, A14.

17. "Putting Haymarket to Rest?" *Labor Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Volume 2, Issue 2 (2005): 35.

18. In 1986, Mayor Harold Washington, the first African American mayor in Chicago's history, declared the month of May as "Labor History Month in Chicago" to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the Haymarket Tragedy. Within his proclamation, Washington stated, "...on this day we commemorate the movement towards the eight-hour day, union rights, civil rights, human rights, and by remembering the tragic miscarriage of justice which claimed the lives of four labor activists." Washington in his speech also highlighted the program organized by the ILHS, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and the Haymarket Centennial Committee and urged, "all citizens to be cognizant of the events planned during this month and of the historical significance of the Haymarket Centennial. For a reprint of this statement, see, <http://www.chicagohistory.org/dramas/>



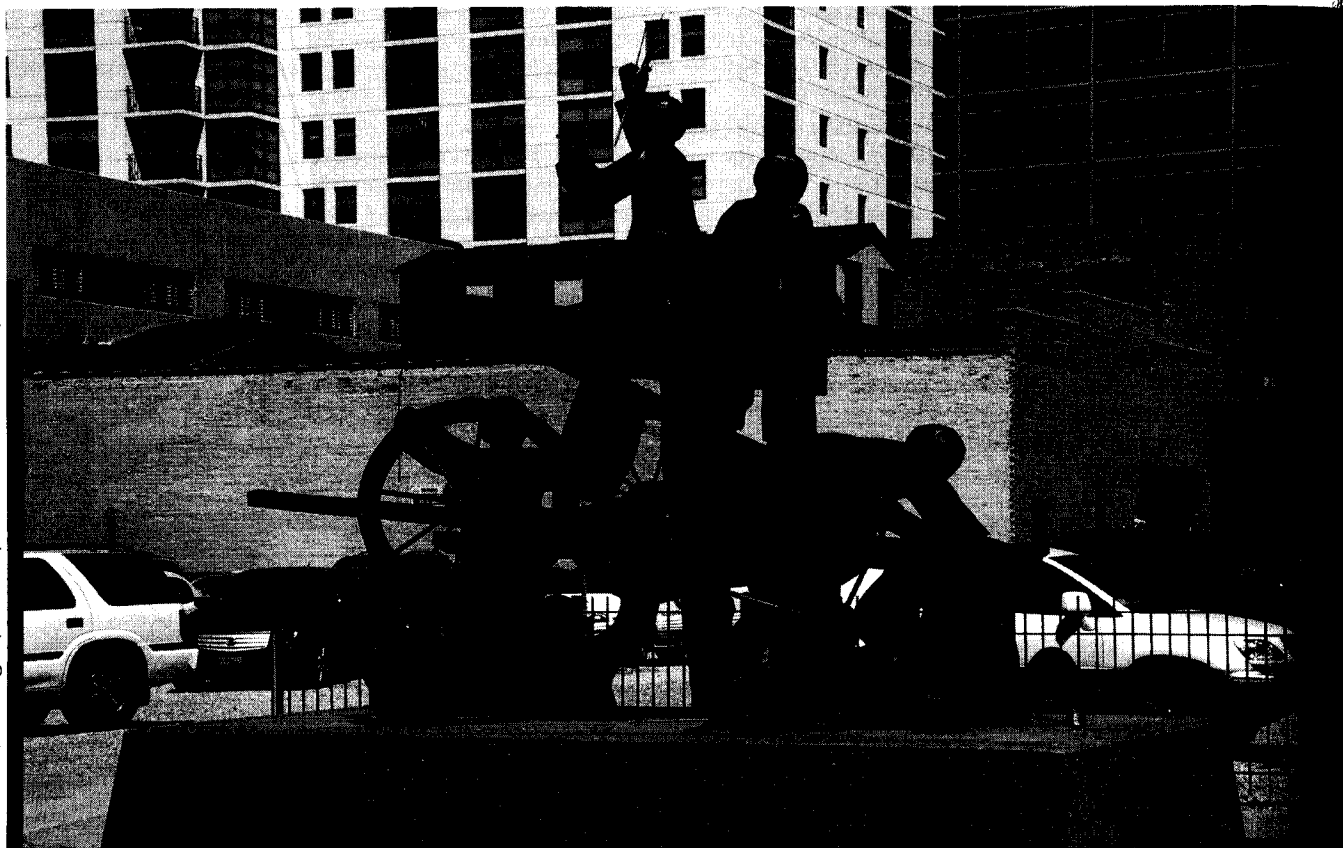
Kanouse did her own tactical bike ride in 2004 that involved biking twenty-seven miles from the Haymarket site to the former location of Fort Sheridan. Today, Fort Sheridan is an expensive suburban housing development north of the city, but in the 1880s the main purpose of the Fort was to protect wealth. In 1887, the year following Haymarket, the Union League Club (who also helped initiate the Police Monument) purchased the 632 acres, which became the Fort, for the United States Army. Troops could be stationed there and quickly deployed into the city to put down labor demonstrations and strikes. To help facilitate this, a military highway, Sheridan Road was constructed to allow for this rapid deployment.

Kanouse's bike ride, which she titled, "Unstorming Sheridan" traveled in the opposite direction, into the suburbs. During her ride, she brought with her radio transmission equipment that acted to jam other radio frequencies within close proximity, causing her broadcast to inter-

rupt what others would be listening to on their car stereo as they passed her. Targeting the Clear Channel affiliated stations, she sent out bursts of "The Internationale" (a famous socialist/anarchist song that dates back to the Paris Commune) for a few seconds at a time. Her individual action spoke of a subtle and symbolic form of resistance against the massive corporate ownership of the airwaves, and was a means of both challenging that power and informing others that those systems are not as impenetrable and all-powerful as they appear to be. Whereas a street protest disrupts the usual cycles of the city causing those who see it to take notice, disrupting a powerful corporate radio station with radical content also startles listeners to imagine other possibilities, or at least to acknowledge that there are those who oppose these powerful institutions.

The *8-Hour Action Series* and Kanouse's bike ride, as compelling and creative as they are, come with limitations. Any action that is seen by such a small amount of people may be easily forgot-

Mary Brogger's Haymarket Monument on Desplaines Street, Chicago (c. 2006). Photo: Nicolas Lampert.



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ten and its impact and ability to create widespread change may be minimal. Yet as Kanouse notes, "While it may be easy to critique the 'tactical' memorial as hopelessly romantic about (and even addicted to) its own ineffectiveness, lingering assumptions about the function of spatial monuments also need to be examined."<sup>15</sup> Mary Brogger's recently installed (2004) monument at Haymarket allows us to compare these two divergent approaches.

### Mary Brogger's Haymarket Monument: The Monument That Forgot Class Struggle

I think we're showing a new way to do monuments at historic sites. You make them open rather than pressing a precise meaning on people or directing them toward a specific feeling or reaction<sup>16</sup>

—Nathan Mason, special projects curator of Chicago's Public Art Program

Nathan Mason's quote accurately describes the scope and the vision of the new monument sculpted by Mary Brogger that now resides on Desplaines Street. The historic location, which had been empty for so long, now features an abstract monument of bronze, genderless figures colored in a red patina, constructing and deconstructing a wagon. At the base of the monument, a series of cautiously worded plaques explains the history of Haymarket. Its mere existence, a monument to Haymarket within a city that had long since refused to acknowledge the history, except from the perspective of the police, is startling and leads us to wonder, why now?

To better understand how this drastic change came to be, it is important to first examine the complicated decade-long process that led up to the public artwork that was funded and approved by the city. When talking about the new monument's content, it is all too easy to focus attention on Mary Brogger, the sculptor herself. But it was the coalition of government agencies, labor organizations, and historians that first agreed upon a series of parameters that ultimately led to its realization and the content that the monument would project. A key player in this process was the Illinois Labor History Society.

The ILHS had lobbied the city government for a permanent monument at the Haymarket site

since the organization's founding in 1969. Despite the fact that the city and the police had created a formidable obstacle to any type of monument to Haymarket from the perspective of labor or anarchism, there were some in Chicago who were willing to challenge this blockade. Les Orear, a Packinghouse union activist, and William Adelman, a labor historian, decided to pool their resources and energy together to form the Haymarket Worker's Memorial Committee. This project soon became part of a larger vision, and on August 5, 1969, the Illinois Labor History Society was formed. The IHLS, along with other local activists, including Bill Garvey, an editor of the newspaper *Steel Labor*, began the long process of lobbying the city government for a monument, representing the position of labor to be built at Haymarket. One of the first steps to revitalizing interest in a potential monument included a public performance in 1969 at the site where the bomb had exploded in 1886. At the event, Studs Terkel, the renowned author and radio host in Chicago, stood on top of a makeshift wagon and spoke of Haymarket's history. Terkel's performance, a public intervention in its own right, would foreshadow the many future actions that would take place in the ensuing decades as others reclaimed the history by means of temporary installations and performances.

Around the same time, the ILHS began organizing events at the Waldheim Cemetery for people to meet and listen to speeches in front of the Haymarket Monument on significant dates in Haymarket's history. The ILHS role of promoting Haymarket's labor history became even more "official" when the deed for the Haymarket Monument at Waldheim was transferred from the last surviving member of the Pioneer Aid and Support Association, Irving S. Abrams, to the ILHS in 1973. The ILHS assumed the role as its owner and became responsible for the monument's upkeep and annual commemorations. Yet, as Lara Kelland notes, this was not without opposition:

Anarchists have responded in kind... A small group often appears at Waldheim during the ILHS events, jeering and interacting with the monument in an attempt to disrupt the proceedings in protest of the ILHS ceremonial work.<sup>17</sup>

19. Jeff Huebner, "A Monumental Effort Pays Off: After years of struggle and disagreement, a sculptural tribute to Haymarket is finally in the works—with almost everybody on board." *Chicago Reader*, 16 January, 2004. Section 2.

20. Tom McNamee, "After 138 years, Haymarket Memorial to be unveiled May Day, at last, for a cause." *Chicago Sun-Times*, 7 September, 2004, 51.

21. *Chicago Reader*, January 16, 2004. Section 2.

22. *New York Times*, September 15, 2004, A14.

23. *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 7, 2004, 51.

24. Michael Piazza interviewed by the author, in person, December 9, 2005.

25. *Chicago Reader*, January 16, 2004. Section 2.

26. The South Chicago Anarchist Black Cross is part of the larger Anarchist Black Cross Network. Their mission statement reads: "The stated purpose of the Anarchist Black Cross Network is to actively assist prisoners in their fight to obtain their civil and human rights, and to aid them in their struggle against the state/class penal and judicial system. We believe the prison system in the US and internationally is the armed fist of the state, and is a system for state slavery. The prison system is not really for 'criminals' or other 'social deviants,' and it does NOT exist for the 'protection of society.' The abolition of prisons, the system of laws and the capitalist state is the ultimate objective of every true anarchist, yet there seems to be no clear agreement by the anarchist movement to put active effort towards that desire. With that being said, the ABC exists to organize and network resources to support all political/class war prisoners." See: <http://chicagoabc.tripod.com/>

27. *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 7, 2004, 51.

28. Only a minute number of artists and others are informed or involved with city public art projects. More often than not, in most US cities, only a small handful of artists, often sculptors, dedicate themselves to applying for these types of grants and commissions. Their work usually graces public parks and the plazas of corporate buildings and grounds, but rarely do these artists engage themselves in art collectives, political art groups, or dialogues about the intersection of art and politics, all of which are deeply relevant to a project that focuses on Haymarket's history.

29. *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 7, 2004, 51.

30. *New York Times*, September 15, 2004, A14.

31. *Chicago Reader*, January 16, 2004. Section 2.

32. Donahue has voiced resistance to the proposed renaming of a city park to Lucy Parsons, wife of Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons. He also voiced objection to a street in Chicago being renamed after the late Fred Hampton, a Black Panther Party leader who was murdered in 1969 by the police during a raid. Donahue said, "It's a 'dark day' when city officials honor a man who called for harming police officers." See, "Union head blasts plan to name street after Black Panther," *The Associated Press*, 28 February, 2006, 7:50 AM CST.

Despite the constant jeers from many anarchists, the ILHS made inroads in lobbying the Chicago government to also have a monument to Haymarket commissioned at the original Haymarket site. This goal likely would have occurred had it not been for the untimely death of Mayor Harold Washington in 1987, who was one of the rare high profile politicians who advocated for the public recognition of Chicago's labor history.<sup>18</sup>

However, in the following decade, the ILHS, which had also teamed up with the Chicago Federation of Labor, found an unlikely audience in 1998 within Mayor Richard M. Daley's administration. Daley (the son of Richard J. Daley who held office from 1955–1976) gave the go-ahead to listen to various proposals for a monument, and in time the coalition grew to include representatives from the Chicago Historical Society and the Chicago Police Department. The success of the project had much to do with the proposed theme of the monument.

Rather than focusing attention on either the anarchist martyrs, the police, the explosion of the bomb or the subsequent trial, the group settled on the broad-based theme of a speaker's wagon repre-

senting "free speech." The wagon alluded to what Samuel Fielden stood upon on May 4th, 1886 as he spoke to workers just before the bomb exploded, but the concept of free speech is much more elusive and abstract. Don Turner, who at the time was the president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, notes the significance of this choice for the proposal's eventual approval:

I think the key issue was removing the focus from the anarchists and making it a First Amendment issue—though it's not like we still don't have anarchists.<sup>19</sup>

Turner further explained: "We brought everybody into the process—the police, the labor community, historians—and we came up with this idea of the wagon as the symbol of freedom of speech. That's how we really put our arms around it."<sup>20</sup> Everybody, that is, except the anarchists.

In 2000, with the concept established, funding was secured from the state program, Illinois FIRST, who designated \$300,000 towards the project. By 2002, the project fell into the jurisdiction of the "Haymarket Tragedy Commemoration of Free Speech and Assembly Monument," under the direction of Nathan Mason, the special projects curator for Chicago's Public Arts Program. With the funding and theme in place, the next step involved selecting an artist to sculpt the vision that the committee had already established. Ten artists were selected to submit proposals, and an eight-member project advisory committee composed of representatives from labor, the police, historians, and community members chose the local sculptor Mary Brogger.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the fact that Brogger had yet to do a figurative public commission before, her Haymarket Monument satisfied the conditions of the committee's vision of a non-confrontational monument that focused upon the speaker's wagon and free speech. Brogger states:

I was pretty adamant in my own mind that it would not be useful to depict violence. The violence didn't seem important, because this event was made up of much bigger ideas than one particular incident. I didn't want to make the imagery conclusive. I want to suggest the complexity of truth, but also people's responsibility for their actions and for the effect of their actions.<sup>22</sup>

In further explaining the symbolism and the message of the monument, she notes:

It has a duality to it. From the standpoint of the wagon being constructed, you see workers in the lower part are working cooperatively to build a platform from which the figures on top can express themselves. And for the viewpoint of the wagon being dismantled, you see the weight of the words being expressed might be the cause of the undoing of the wagon. It's a cautionary tale that you are responsible for the words you say.<sup>23</sup>

Brogger's comments are as ambiguous as the monument itself, and could be understood as saying that the anarchist labor activists had it coming to them for directly challenging the power structure. Although she clearly seems more troubled by the speech of the anarchists than the indiscriminate gunfire of the police, a focus on the artist is not helpful here. Brogger is a minor player in the ongoing debate over the new monument. In the majority of public art projects today, the artist is simply hired to carry out the subject matter and the content that someone else has already pre-determined. The artist can add an aesthetic quality to the work, and in this regard, we can critique Brogger's efforts. Michael Piazza's humorous commentary of her sculpture is that it looks like a "Gumby version of a romantic Civil War memorial." That aside, the real issue of her Haymarket Monument is the nature of public art itself and the pitfalls of allowing a small group of individuals to decide what is placed within civic spaces.<sup>24</sup>

The small committee of government agencies, historical societies, and labor organizations (namely the ILHS, the Chicago Federation of Labor, the Chicago Historical Society and the Chicago Police Department) that agreed upon the monument's content is not a broad cross section of the population. A plan for a monument at the Haymarket site directed by any small group of individuals and agencies is inherently problematic and bound to alienate a vast amount of people. Thus the very concept of a top-down structure, which decides the monument for the Haymarket site, is an exercise in futility, if the goal is truly to represent the multiple meanings associated with its history.

As one might expect, the process-by-committee became guarded and exclusive. For example, the inviting of only ten artists to submit proposals

for the design is clearly problematic. However, the biggest issue was the exclusion of voices that might have differed with the committee's opinions. From the start, anarchists were shut out of the discussion. Nathan Mason, Chicago's Public Art Program curator for the project, remarked in early 2004, "Who would they choose to represent themselves?"<sup>25</sup> This dismissive comment indicates a lack of serious effort on the committee's part to solicit the input of anarchists and also assumes that the committee itself was more qualified to visualize Haymarket's history.

The committee, with little effort, could have reached out to anarchists within Chicago and beyond. They could have learned about and contacted the A-Zone, a high profile center of anarchist culture and organizing that had been in existence for nearly a decade at the time of the process. Likewise they could have contacted the curators at the Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan, which houses the largest anarchist archive in the country, or any number of other academic collections with large anarchist holdings. Apparently a Chicago-area anarchist, Anthony Rayson, who is part of the South Chicago Anarchist Black Cross, was invited to a meeting in order to determine the text of the plaques that were attached to the base.<sup>26</sup> He declined to attend, but either way, inviting one person this late in the process—after the content of the monument was pre-determined—was far from sufficient.<sup>27</sup> Besides what would have inviting Rayson truly accomplished? It is equally problematic to assume that Rayson (or any single individual) could have represented the concerns of anarchists. The diversity of opinions amongst anarchists is as vast as any other type of political affiliation. This type of approach, of inviting a single person to speak for many, regardless of the affiliation, only reinforces the top-down structure of a project that was inherently flawed and undemocratic.

Considering the relatively closed process of selecting the monument, the dedication ceremony came as a surprise to many within the city and beyond who had no idea that a monument was even in the works.<sup>28</sup> On September 14th, 2004 the new monument was dedicated and not surprisingly, the public reaction to it was deeply divided.

During the official dedication ceremony, city officials, representatives of organized labor,

and police officers congratulated themselves and each another. A central theme of many of their speeches was that of reconciliation, the notion that the wounds of the past and the divisions between labor and the police were beginning to heal. A small group of anarchists in the crowd held up black flags to voice their disgust with the entire proceedings. Anthony Rayson was quoted in the *Chicago Sun-Times* as saying, "This is a revisionist history thing. They're trying to whitewash the whole thing, take it away from the anarchists and make it a free-speech issue."<sup>29</sup> A *New York Times* article quoted another dissenting voice in the crowd, Steve Craig as stating,

Those men who were hanged are being presented as social democrats or liberal reformers, when in fact they dedicated their whole lives to anarchy and social revolution. If they were here today, they'd be denouncing this project and everyone involved in it.<sup>30</sup>

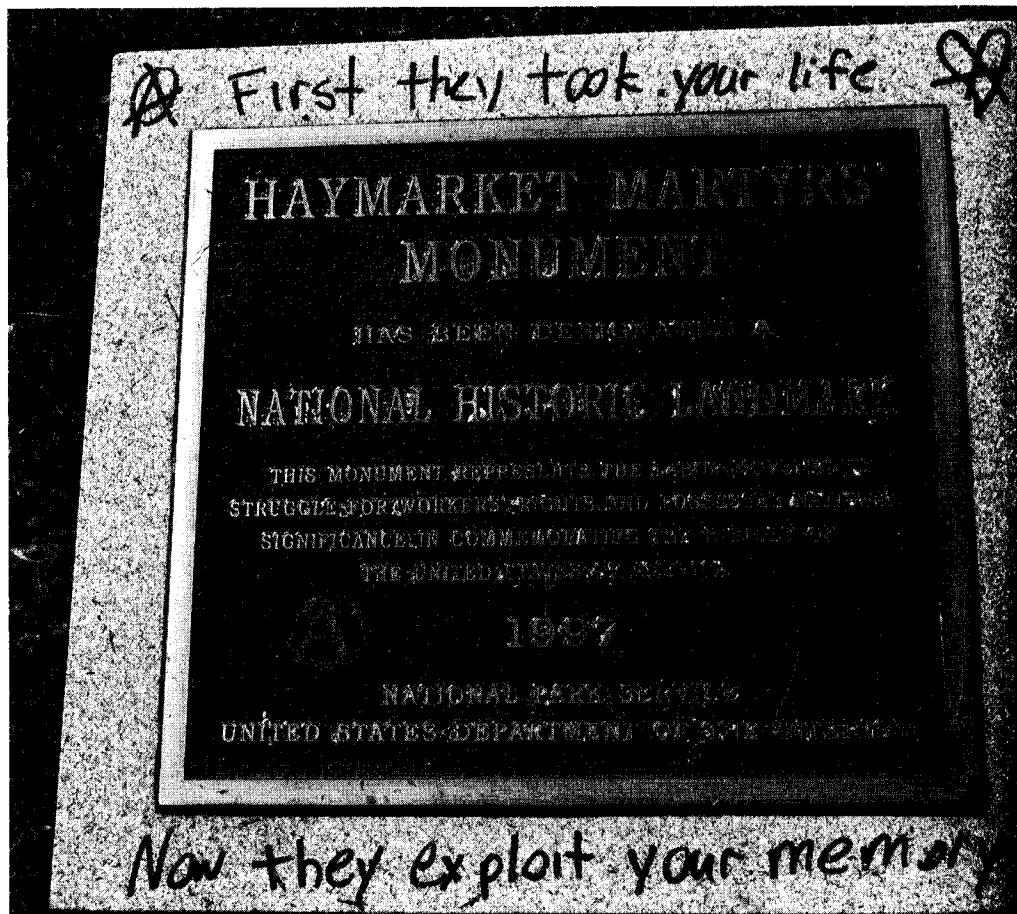
They would have also heard Mark Donahue, president of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police and a member of the monument's project advisory board, state, "We've come such a long way to be included in this... We're part of the labor movement now, too, and glad to be there."<sup>31</sup> The question remains, however, would Donahue have made such a statement had anarchists been part of the process of conceptualizing a monument? Would

he have stated this had the monument given a more pronounced focus to either the anarchist martyrs or the class conflict between labor and the police that had resulted in the Haymarket riot?<sup>32</sup> As the historian Lara Kelland notes:

By polarizing the meaning of the 1886 event between free speech and labor in opposition to radical social critique of government and industry, the memorial effort becomes palatable for those officially involved.<sup>33</sup>

Donahue's notion of the police as now being part of the labor movement is also duplicitous. While it is true that police officers are "workers" and many are organized into unions, his comments promote the notion that the police and other workers in society share the same interests and class goals. While it is true that the police are no longer gunning down workers who are out on strike, the police still protect

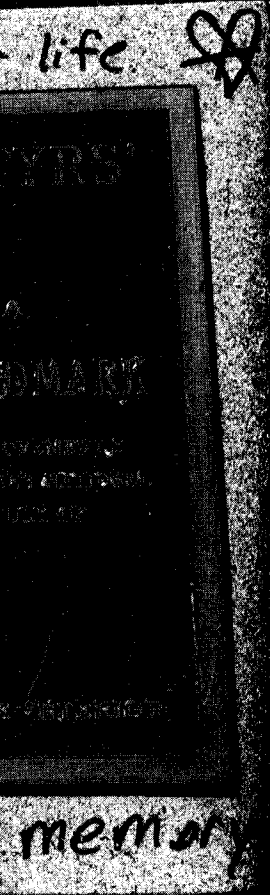
Graffiti on the plaque noting the National Historic Landmark status of the Haymarket Monument at Waldheim, 1997. Photo: Wikipedia Commons/posted by Bogdan Markiewicz.



ument given a more anarchist martyrs or and the police that riot.<sup>32</sup> As the histo-

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the interests of capital and the state. At labor demonstrations, their batons and pepper spray fall squarely upon the heads of workers. Perhaps Donahue's biggest error was that he attempted to speak for a larger entity, when in fact he was speaking solely as an individual. Diana Berek, a Chicago-based artist and co-editor of *Chicago Labor and Arts Notes* explains, "Individuals can reconcile their wounds, but not classes, not institutions and certainly not the entities of organized labor and the police."<sup>34</sup>

If anything, Donahue's statements reinforce just how easy it is to oversimplify and blur history, especially events as complex as Haymarket. The new monument only adds to this confusion and the attempt to make it appear objective is one of its greatest flaws, for it is not possible to be neutral on the issue of Haymarket. As Berek notes, "Battles for social justice, conflicts around economic and political class conflict will never be easy to tidy up so that they can be objectified, sensitized and made emotionally uplifting to every point of view."<sup>35</sup> While much has changed in the 120 years since Haymarket, we do not live in a society where class conflict is a thing of the past. If anything, the division between the haves and the have-nots has become increasingly pronounced, and the methods to marginalize working class people, unions, and social movements have become increasingly sophisticated. A monument can proclaim that Haymarket was about free speech, but that does not make it necessarily true.

Others would disagree. Tim Samuelson, a cultural historian who was also part of the committee for the new monument, remarked, "It takes a while for people to get an objective perspective on historical events and see [Haymarket] as an overall tragedy and not a polarizing issue."<sup>36</sup> Samuelson, however, fails to mention how the public learns about historical events. He fails to qualify his statement by explaining who owns history. The new monument teaches the public to view Haymarket as a benign event where the most prominent issue was the right to free speech. In this regard, the committee who decided upon this content chose to ignore the history of the class conflict between the workers and the police. The past monuments, both of which represented their specific constituencies (The Police Monument representing the police, and the Haymarket Monument at Waldheim representing

anarchists and abstractly, the labor movement) did not shy away from defending their interests. The new monument, however, erases these interests and sets a dangerous precedent for a new generation to learn about Haymarket. The question remains if the new monument will, in fact, inspire people to learn more about the complex history of Haymarket, or if it will pacify people's interest in the history with its banal and abstract representation of the event.

In addition, why was the city so willing to act now when it had been so resistant in the past? Nathan Mason notes that, "Thousands of visitors come to the site. It speaks poorly of the city if we let it be a barren, littered concrete slab."<sup>37</sup> Yet this absence was not an issue in the past. Why now? Lara Kelland offers one possible explanation:

The explanation for such a shift in preservation policy might be found in larger city forces. Chicago of the 1990s faced entirely different challenges than it did earlier in the twentieth century. Gentrification brought a middle-class base back into the city after a generation of white flight, and heritage tourism also now offered a tantalizing revenue stream to city leaders. It is at this moment that civic commemoration was finally in the city's interests, and the postindustrial environment offered a context in which organized labor was one interest group among many to be accommodated in the commemorative process.<sup>38</sup>

In this regard, is the new monument part of an overall tourism scheme? This notion perhaps helps explain one of the many complexities behind the monument finally coming to light. But arguably the most pressing issue remains the undemocratic nature of a small group of individuals deciding upon what is presented in public space and taking ownership of how Haymarket's history is represented in such an important location.

#### Where Do We Go From Here? Other Possibilities for the Haymarket Site

I think [anarchists] would object to anything being put there by the city, the government<sup>39</sup>

—William Adelman, labor historian, vice president of the ILHS

It is very doubtful that any type of monument on the Haymarket site that was funded, sanctioned

and maintained by the city would be satisfactory to many anarchists. A singular monument by its nature counters the ideals of a directly democratic, collective society and is too closely related to the attitudes and actions of capitalist and communist societies where monuments to "great individuals" are abundant. Examining the past history of the Haymarket Monument at the Waldheim Cemetery is helpful in addressing this question. Emma Goldman spoke of this dilemma when she considered the merits of the martyrs' monument at Waldheim:

My thoughts wandered back to the time when I had opposed the erection of the monument. I had argued that our dead comrades needed no stone to immortalize them. I realized now how narrow and bigoted I had been, and how little I understand the power of art. The monument served as an embodiment of the ideals for which the men had died, a visible symbol of their words and their deeds.<sup>40</sup>

Goldman's initial doubts over the need for a monument are refreshing and they are shared by many who have conflicting ideas over the positives and negatives of monuments. For each case is site-specific, and the issue of monuments to Haymarket's history is exceedingly complex, making it difficult to settle upon a rigid position. Yet to many anarchists, the monument at Waldheim becomes acceptable only because it was maintained by the martyr's families, including Lucy Parsons (widow of the slain Albert Parsons), under the direction of the Pioneer Aid and Support Association. The anarchist supported and initiated monument existed at the gravesite of the martyrs and was disconnected from direct government funding and control. Under these parameters, the Haymarket Monument at Waldheim has been widely embraced by anarchists and it is only in recent times that the monument has become contentious, especially since the ILHS took over its deed in 1973, and decided in 1997 to register the monument as a National Historic Landmark.

Connecting the martyrs' monument to the federal government was the last straw for many anarchists. The National Historic Landmark plaque is routinely vandalized with anarchist symbols in an act of protest and a reclaiming of the history. During the dedication ceremony of the landmark status in 1997, a group of anarchists disrupted the event and berated the crowd, labor speakers, and historians

for selling out the memory of the martyrs by allowing the very government who executed them to give landmark status to their gravesite. At one point, the actress Alma Washington, dressed as Lucy Parsons, unveiled the plaque, only to have anarchists spit upon it. Clearly, the long-standing friction between anarchists and the ILHS is far from being resolved, if, in fact, it ever can be.

At stake is how the memory of Haymarket is projected. Does it belong to a broad-based labor movement or should it remain rooted within the anarchist principles of the martyrs? Likewise, does it belong to the police? And who represents each of these divergent groups? This divide complicates any discussion over the proposal and the manifestation of monuments to Haymarket, especially within Chicago. Yet this issue is not so black and white, and there exists a gray area, even regarding the new monument that was dedicated in 2004.

The new Haymarket monument gives just enough mention to the anarchists within the cautiously worded plaques that it is more difficult to vent out against compared to the obviously repressive symbol of the Police Monument. Nonetheless, the sculptor of the monument, Mary Brogger, expressed concerns that the monument would become a target. She noted, "The real challenge is to make a monument that people won't bomb," and she remarked that the surface patina was chosen so that it would be easy to clean up any graffiti written on it.<sup>41</sup>

To the new monument's credit, an element of participation, if extremely limited, was built in. The pedestal of the monument has room for a number of additional plaques to be installed connecting recent labor struggles to Haymarket. During the May Day 2005 ceremony at the monument, a delegation of union trade leaders from Colombia presented the first plaque to be added to the pedestal in honor of the 1,300 trade unionists that have been murdered in Colombia between 1991 and 2001.<sup>42</sup> Johnny Meneses, a union activist from Colombia, told the crowd, "You have one monument. But in Colombia, we would need many more than that."<sup>43</sup> In this case, the new monument served as an important location for solidarity campaigns, allowing US citizens to be informed of the troubling situation that is taking place within Colombia, and the static monument becomes more flexible. However, one



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should note that the pedestal is relatively small and only a certain number of plaques will be able to be installed. Who will select the plaques, which struggles will be deemed important, and which ones will be deemed unimportant?

The participatory aspect of the monument—arguably its most redeeming quality—raises the question of whether this should have been the monument's main focus. What if the monument on Desplaines Street was not a single monument on a pedestal, but a park that had ample room to explain the history of Haymarket from a variety of perspectives—be it labor's, the anarchists', the police's, or from the local and international community's? Within this park there could be a wall where eventually thousands of plaques could be added that spoke of global solidarity struggles. The park could include a museum that would be a place to learn about Haymarket's history and how it could be applied to the present. Lew Rosenbaum, a Chicago activist and co-editor of *Chicago Labor and Arts Notes*, suggested that a more ideal monument to Haymarket would also include an art center. He noted the idea of a living monument:

Something that would attempt to envision what a group of revolutionaries today would be battling for. I'd want an art center that challenged artists to represent the polarities developing in our society, not the society of a century ago, and to carry the message out with them in their work. I somehow don't think today's Joe Hills are singing the same songs.<sup>44</sup>

To Rosenbaum, a single monument is problematic because it "crystallizes the past without allowing for a changing future."<sup>45</sup> This important critique relates to the majority of static monuments, but there is a common desire by many people to preserve past monuments as indicators of the cultural and political attitudes of the time. Many have objected to monuments and other symbols of state power being completely removed (such as the Berlin Wall and the monuments to Stalin and other communist leaders throughout Russia and Eastern Europe), because they still have the ability to educate us about a past history, however troubling they may be. In Budapest, Hungary, many of these didactic, authoritarian monuments were moved after the fall of communism to Statue Park, on the outskirts

of the city, where visitors to the park can visualize the symbols of the oppressive dictators and culture of the recent past. This fascinating example of a collection of monuments representing various ideological viewpoints could be a model for Haymarket. Perhaps, if a park on Desplaines Street was created (which has been proposed in the past, including by the ILHS), a number of monuments could co-exist on the same space, and the public could decide their ultimate fate.

At present, there does not seem to be a critical mass of voices calling for either the creation of a more inclusive and honest marker at the Haymarket site or the removal of Brogger's Haymarket Monument. Is this because of the open-ended meaning of Brogger's monument or the fact that it attempts to appease all sides? Is it indicative of the present political climate of apathy towards the actions of the state? Are there simply more important things to advocate for? Amidst the consumer distractions and the long workweeks that most individuals endure, one wonders if monuments that address past historic struggles still matter and merit our attention? Back in 1890, Martin Lacher, then secretary for the Pioneer Aid and Support Association, in objection to the Police Monument, stated, "Perhaps not in this generation, [but] that statue will come down. Public sentiment will cause its downfall."<sup>46</sup> The question remains, will today's public demand the same?

33. "Putting Haymarket to Rest?" *Labor Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 36.

34. Diana Berek interviewed by the author, by email, 20 February, 2006.

35. Ibid.

36. *Chicago Reader*, 16, January 2004. Section 2.

37. Ibid.

38. "Putting Haymarket to Rest?" *Labor Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 35.

39. *Chicago Reader*, 16, January, 2004. Section 2.

40. Emma Goldman quoted in Melissa Dabakis, *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture: Monuments, Manliness, and the Work Ethic, 1880-1935*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50. See, Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 1 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), 221-22.

41. *Chicago Reader*, 16 January, 2004. Section 2.; New York Times, 15 September 2004, A14.

42. Green, James. "The Globalization of a Memory: The Enduring Remembrance of the Haymarket Martyrs around the World." *Labor Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Volume 2, Issue 4 (2005): 22.

43. Ibid., 22-23.

44. Lew Rosenbaum interviewed by the author, by email, 20, February, 2006.

45. Ibid.

46. "Attempt to Wreck Monument, Mr. Lacher Says the Police Are the Conspirators—No Arrests," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 26, 1890, 3.

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I am grateful for the edits, suggestions, conversations, and reviews of previous drafts of the essay by Josh MacPhee, Erik Reuland, Daniel Tucker, Sue Simensky-Bietila, and John Couture. This essay is dedicated to Michael Piazza, who passed away in 2006. His spirit, convictions, and dedication to art and activism will always inspire those of us who were fortunate enough to meet him.



# THE NEOLIBERAL CITY



Autonomous Cultural Practices in Chicago From 2000-2005

## Trashing The Neoliberal City: Autonomous Cultural Practices in Chicago From 2000-2005

As the territorial boundaries of the international 'ownership society' expand, we witness our last public square being wired for surveillance and renamed after a corporation. With this sweeping expansion, we (the editors) feel an urgent need to reclaim, rebuild, and redefine public space as not only an essential component of democratic participation, but also as an open field for play, hope, and critical reinvention.

Towards the ends of that reinvention, this publication will take a look at a unique period of cultural activism that took place in Chicago from 2000 to 2005. At that time a wide range of activists, artists and hybrid coalitions responded to the spatial shifts in power created by neoliberal economic restructuring. Using a diverse range of methodologies, as you will see, these groups and projects address some of the most fundamental and urgent challenges of contemporary urban life.

The term 'neoliberalism' refers to the historical transformation and recent extension of capitalist market domination into every corner of the globe and into every moment of our waking lives. Its dominating

logic of free-market fundamentalism corrodes social solidarity as it rejects social justice in favor of individual 'freedom' to compete and consume.

Neoliberal policies of corporate governmentality, structural adjustment, privatization, financialization, and deregulation of labor and markets have amounted to a complete dismantling of the **Keynesian** welfare state (public spending to stimulate the economy) as well as an erosion of the democratic protections and political gains fought for by hundreds of years of peoples' struggle. The practical effects of this global policy of accumulation through dispossession have been the rapid, and geographically uneven distribution of poverty and structural inequality.

In the US, the dissolution of most aspects of the social state (such as public education and public housing) are concomitant with the development of a massive market for, and public financing of, the prison and military. In Chicago this has meant the imposition of new surveillance and policing infrastructures in increasingly disenfranchised and abandoned low-income neighborhoods at the edges of the city,

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while the majority of transportation renovations, new libraries, parks and capital investments have been centralized in the ever-expanding core of downtown gentrification.

While the increasingly speculative nature of real estate has made the pattern of gentrification a dominant one in every city, Chicago has experienced particularly violent waves of residential regeneration. Public spaces and social institutions for the provision of common needs such as food, shelter, and education have been thrown into the private market, forcing Chicago's residents to become citizen-entrepreneurs; competing with each other for extremely scarce employment opportunities and public resources.

The projects in this publication raise fundamental questions about our right to the city and the possible uses of culture in the struggle for community self-determination: *How should we interact with our neighbors? What kinds of reforms do we want from the state and what kinds of collective infrastructures should we be building ourselves instead? What kinds of spaces encourage resistance, free movement, and the well being of the whole population? What would it take to denormalize capitalism in the 'global' city of Chicago?*

Much of the work presented here reflects temporary organizations and events. In cases where it was possible, the projects and groups are described

by their participants or initiators and are accompanied by press releases and promotional ephemera that were used at the time of the project's initiation. The first section of this publication, "Right to the City", looks at contestations of the planning of housing and land use in the city. Projects that respond to the gentrification of various neighborhoods will be shared alongside campaigns that critique tourist-centric economic development plans, and the corresponding privatization of public housing and public space.

In the other sections "Protest Experiments" and "Social Reorganization" we will look at self-organized attempts to create alternative public spheres through the reinvention of protest and the creation of other spaces for democratic convergence. The presentation of independent media projects alongside space reclamations and interventions offer examples of exciting ways of democratically sharing ideas and writing alternative histories while resisting the consolidation of media, communication, and social life under the control of fewer and fewer corporations. These alternative models of resource sharing and cooperation counter the hyperindividualism and competition that has taken hold of our minds, and instead build coalitions and creative communities of resistance that are building the capacity for a radical and imaginative new course.

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## The Right to the City: Gentrification and the Struggle for Urban Space

What is gentrification? Who does gentrification impact? How is it perpetuated? Is it inevitable or “natural”? What are the alternatives? And how are these alternatives most effectively demanded, implemented and maintained? These questions have and continue to animate activist responses to loss of affordable housing, to displacement, and how this gentrification privileges some values while displacing others through the cultural and economic reorganization of existing classes, groups and resources in urban environments.

Since the 1970s, great economic reorganization has occurred in cities and brought about a tremendous growth of the real-estate market - resulting in the tendency of speculation that provides anyone with the means to invest, a potential entrepreneurial role in the urban housing market. “Blighted” neighborhoods previously ignored, working class enclaves formerly centered around factory work, pockets of affordability near transportation or other amenities - residents and small businesses in these contexts are all increasingly victims of a rabid real estate market that is not accountable to residents.

In keeping with capitalism’s tendency to overdevelop certain contexts while underdeveloping others, the contemporary phase of neoliberal policies provides refined tools to the owning class for greater accumulation in the urban context. The expansion of urban markets and “urban regeneration” practices have brought enormous investment to areas that have been neglected for decades, at the same time, local governments often fail to provide adequate support for existing communities, compounding their vulnerability to displacement.

The particulars of development practices that lead to significant displacement can take many forms. Rent-gap speculation allows property to devalue with significant disparities between potential and actual

rent collected. This leaves properties to be bought inexpensively and re-sold for immense profits. Other strategies include the more aggressive tear-down style build-it-and-they-will-come development. There are also the government sponsored interventions that sell previously public land at subsidized rates. Each of these examples achieve similar spatial-economic reorganization through the private market without securing benefits for residents or holding developers accountable: displacing the most precarious members of the neighborhood first, attacking the integrity and viability of neighborhood institutions through rising property values and land taxes, and eventually converting the existing infrastructure to cater the needs and values of new residents.

In an attempt to address the complexity of life in an increasingly privatized and unaccountable landscape - with deregulated free markets having more direct impact on social welfare than the state- the following projects have dissected some of the most challenging questions of contemporary city life. They take on the real estate development corporations, the cultural/lifestyle marketing industries, the public relations firms, the ‘public-private partnerships’ and the politicians who greedily exploit the human need for housing. These projects show, through creative and cultural intervention, what possibilities exist for exposing the actors, schemes, and agendas most significantly impacting affordable housing and neighborhood integrity - two of the most basic requirements for social reorganization and self determination. Though significant shifts in power (and specifically in policy) will be required for most people to obtain a right to housing, these practices can begin to influence shifts in culture and information necessary to better understand where we are at and where we want to go.

## Whose City Is It Anyways? by Pauline Lipman

The new world order is coming to roost in Chicago with a vengeance.

Increasingly the city is defined by neoliberalism, the global policies of transnational capital that make the market and individual self-interest primary in every sphere of economic and social life. On every side we see the elimination of the public interest and public control, from privatization (and corporatization) of parks (**Millennium Park**), schools (**Renaissance 2010**, the current reform master plan for public education in Chicago), and bus shelters to the elimination of public housing. Corporate and finance capital in collaboration with the **Daley** administration are reconstructing the city to serve their interests. Their agenda grows out of changing relations between cities and the global economy and the emergence of gentrification as a pivotal force in urban economies.

In the new global economy, major cities compete directly for investment, corporate headquarters, international tourism, and business services. This competition drives cities like Chicago to engage in aggressive marketing of urban space. The city's ubiquitous new boulevards and wrought iron fences, its lakeshore remake, and now Millennium Park exemplify this strategy. It also drives them to provide the most favorable business climate (tax cuts, investment opportunities, and well-trained low-wage service and production workers) as well as an environment that can attract high paid professionals (a few elite public schools, upscale neighborhoods). In this context, low-income people of color, particularly African Americans, must be policed, contained, and demonized to justify their displacement and exclusion.

Gentrification is key to remaking the city. Urban sociologists argue gentrification has become a pivotal sector in the new neoliberal urban economies as developers transform whole city landscapes into "gentrification complexes" of consumption, recreation, culture, and public space. You only have to look at **University Village** or River North to see that this is true. This is facilitated by city government through Tax Increment Financing Zones (TIFs), new transportation routes (the proposed "Circle Line"), the elimination of public housing to open up land for development, aesthetic infrastructure improvements at tax payer expense (all those boulevards and "street scapes"), and the criminalization of low-income people of color and the policing of all populations deemed "undesirable."

The conquest of the city as a space of middle class stability and whiteness is both actual and rhetorical. A key feature of neoliberalism is reframing the public conversation about the city--who has a right to live there, what constitutes a "good" neighborhood,

and what kinds of economic development are possible. Privatization, gentrification, deindustrialization, and higher costs for public services are presented as inevitable, the only possible solution. The class nature and the racism of this process are hidden in the language of "mixed income communities" and "regeneration"--or in Chicago's case "renaissance" and "transformation". We live in a city that spent \$1/2 billion for Millennium Park; regularly gives tax breaks to and funds massive infrastructure improvements for developers; tore down 19,000 units of public housing to open up space for development, displacing whole working class communities for condos; and a city that polices those who transgress the city image. Chicago is a city whose officials raise fares on public transportation, fail to educate students and then use that failure as a reason to privatize schools, and that criminalizes whole sectors of African American communities. How do they get away with this? In part, they have created a new common sense. The only way the city can "move forward" is through their agenda.

What we need is a direct challenge to the practice and discourse of hijacking the city for private gain - a challenge from the ground. The practices here offer fresh approaches to collective organizing against the neoliberal city, and accounts of public interventions that reframe the discussion about the city. What we need are actions that blend art and activism to create discussion, to force open a new conversation, to define reality from the point of view of those on the bottom. We need an exciting new energy that challenges who will live in the city, who will benefit from its growth and development, and who will get to participate in fundamental decisions affecting economic, cultural, and social life. What we need is a space to contest whose city Chicago will be.

This text was originally published in AREA Chicago Issue #1 ([www.areachicago.org](http://www.areachicago.org))



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### Pioneer Renewal Trust

In the fall of 2001, a group of artists were invited to create a project at **Dogmatic**, a gallery in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of **East Pilsen**. In order to address the intense speculation in the neighborhood by developers, the invited group decided to pose as a real estate development company, Pioneer Renewal Trust, and put the building that housed the gallery up for sale. The objective was to lure developers into a dialogue and confront them using their own language and double speak. The house was listed in local newspaper classifieds and development signs were placed on the front of the building. The seemingly earnest signs were changed every week to reflect the continued expansion of the real estate charade, becoming increasingly absurd as the project wore on. Three open houses were also held, during which the artists performed the roles of developer/salesperson while also attempting to convey their real critique of the gentrification process. The project concluded with Pioneer Renewal Trust coming clean at an outdoor public forum held in the street in front of Dogmatic. The forum discussed gentrification, current and historical resistance to the process, and the limitations of their faux company tactic, which had succeeded more in hoaxing young people in search of affordable housing than the greedy developers who were the intended target.



## Daley Village

### MEDIA ALERT:

Just about everyone in Chicago remembers the beautiful life. Single family residences curled up next to spacious throughfares, with neighbors who said "Hello". A community of diversity, with transportation and bustling business districts nearby. Acclaimed schools and gorgeous parks...is it the Chicago of yesteryear?

Daley Village is not just a new development. Named after one of the most notable leaders of our fair city, Daley Village is positioned to be one of the most unique living experiences available, at affordable prices for all.

Spacious single and multi-family residences with spectacular city views will offer a haven from the city chill. The homes, designed by top-notch architects famous for their attention to artistic details, all feature newly built walls and customized exterior decoration. Ample parking is also available.

**WHAT:** Groundbreaking ceremony for Daley Village, the newest housing initiative for low income families

**WHY:** Low income families need dramatically new and different housing opportunities. This initiative reflects the City of Chicago's dedication to the shelter of its citizens.

**WHERE:** The first Daley Village test site, at 920 N. Elston Ave., two blocks north of the intersection of Elston and Milwaukee Avenues.

**WHEN:** 10:00 a.m., Monday, December 3, 2001

**WHO:** Daley Village is a collective effort of the City of Chicago, the Pioneer Renewal Trust development group and Housing Illinois, an organization dedicated to exploring affordable housing options for all in the Land of Lincoln.





## Principality of Podmajersky

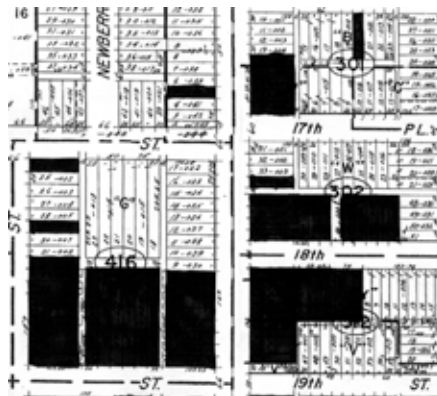
*"It is the dark ages. Warlords, gangster capitalists and landed persons fight for control of property, products and people. The centers of culture have fallen and artisans, workers and producers of knowledge scramble to find fiefdoms and courts in which to find shelter and protection. In the midst of a crumbling empire many landholders jostle for power. In the ancient land of Pilsen, while workers plow the fields, a family has taken in many lost minstrels and artisans. Through invasion and fortification a new land has taken root and is conquering territories throughout the realm, collecting dues and administering their particular blend of manorial system. This new territory is called The Principality of Podmajersky."*

- from [www.lumpen.com/pop](http://www.lumpen.com/pop)

The **Podmajersky** family for the last 2 generations has catered to artist communities in search of affordable housing. The current John Podmajersky III has taken to the speculative model of development practices and incorporated the artist community into a sophisticated neighborhood-branding effort. He has named this initiative "**The Chicago Arts District**" referencing the live/work spaces which he has converted from commercially zoned storefronts and small factories on the main stretches of the neighborhood. The housing stock caters to artists who needed flexible spaces to produce objects within and for a time, cheap rents made these houses, an attractive offer for primarily young and white cultural producers to temporarily occupy.

In the context of a new media arts festival called **VersionFest** in 2004, a group calling themselves *Ultramar Baymount* decided to take an analysis of these neighborhood dynamics to the streets in a project called *Principality of Podmajersky*. Using their own street signage, stickers and flyers the group launched a mapping of the properties in the neighborhood owned by the Podmajersky company, nicknamed "Pod's", which are typically recognizable because of their uniform address signage on doorways and above mailboxes. The tongue-in-cheek project aimed to declare the entire neighborhood to be a new territory *Principality of Podmajersky*, as if the consolidation of so much property under one family must be rooted in some kind of contemporary aristocratic form of land use. The materials produced also gathered information about researching land ownership.

On the project's website a lively debate emerged about real estate development and gentrification in the neighborhood.





## Artists Against Artist Housing by Laurie Palmer

For much of the 20th century **Uptown** was an exceptionally diverse community ethnically and economically, an entry point for immigrants from all over the world -- Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, with different waves arriving at different times. Many stayed in Uptown where already established immigrant communities as well as social services and affordable housing options made it possible to live in the city on low and moderate incomes. With a strong gentrifying push moving up the lakefront in the late 90s and supported by **City Hall's** plan to develop the Broadway corridor, many of these residents were pushed out.

The lack of affordable rental units was exacerbated by deliberate campaigns by the new gentrifiers to criminalize long-term residents and to rid the neighborhood of social services. In this context a long-running neighborhood activist group with origins in the sixties and seventies re-created itself under the name **COURAJ** (Community of Uptown Residents for Affordability and Justice) and began to try to intercept this deliberate process. One of **COURAJ's** main goals was to secure 200 units of low-cost housing in the new Tax Increment Financing or "TIF"(1) development project called the **Wilson Yards** at Montrose and Broadway. Starting around 1998 there were many years of charrettes, referendums, rallies, marches, meetings, and trips to city hall to positively affect these planning decisions and to try to help stabilize the existing community.

In 2004 **COURAJ** saw the share of the Wilson Yard TIF property reserved for affordable housing dwindle to a small piece of what the organization had been fighting for. However, affordable housing still retained a foothold in the plan, and so the organized gentrifiers introduced yet another twist. They decided to push for the idea that the affordable housing quotient still remaining in the development plan be for artists housing because, they argued, artists too need subsidized space. It was a pathetic attempt to use artists -- those supposedly class-less value-adders -- to augment their property values. Three of us donned berets and protested their rally. What I don't have is a picture of the sea of orange-shirted pro-artist housing people, about 30 of them, with identical bright orange t-shirts -- which would have made a much more compelling image.

(1) For more information on TIF see the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group [www.ncbg.org](http://www.ncbg.org)

ARTISTS  
SEEKING  
SOLUTIONS TO  
HOUSING BY  
POUSTING  
LOW-INCOME PEOPLE FROM  
EVERYWHERE!



## Anti-Displacement and Poor Peoples Groups Listing

### Chicago:

Pilsen Alliance (Pilsen)  
[Pilsenalliance.org](http://Pilsenalliance.org)  
 STOP/Student Tenant Organizing Project (Woodlawn) [stopgentrification@gmail.com](mailto:stopgentrification@gmail.com)  
 Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project  
[Prcc-chgo.org](http://Prcc-chgo.org)  
 Metropolitan Tenants Organization  
[Tenants-rights.org](http://Tenants-rights.org)  
 Coalition to Project Public Housing  
[Limits.com/cpph](http://Limits.com/cpph)  
 Blocks Together (West Humboldt)  
 773-276-2194 [Blockstogether.org](http://Blockstogether.org)  
 Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO) (Mid South Side) 773-548-7500  
 Organization of the Northeast (Northside)  
[Onechicago.org](http://Onechicago.org)  
 Logan Square Neighborhood Association  
[Lsna.net](http://Lsna.net)  
 Balanced Development Coalition  
 312-759-8269  
 Chicago Coalition for the Homeless  
[Chicagohomeless.org](http://Chicagohomeless.org)  
 West Humboldt Park Community Dev. Council-  
[Whpdevelopmentcouncil.org](http://Whpdevelopmentcouncil.org)  
 Near West Side Community Dev. Corporation  
[Nearwestsidecdc.org](http://Nearwestsidecdc.org)  
 West Town Leadership United 773-394-7484  
 Poor People's Millenium Movement  
[beauty@wethepeoplemedia.org](mailto:beauty@wethepeoplemedia.org)  
 Neighborhood Capital Budget Group  
[Ncbg.org](http://Ncbg.org)  
 RPCAN (Rogers Park) [www.rpcan.org](http://www.rpcan.org)  
**COURAJ** (Uptown)  
 4554 N. Broadway #236 60640  
 Brighton Park Neighborhood Council  
[Bpnc-chicago.org](http://Bpnc-chicago.org)  
 Lugenia Burns Hope Center (Bronzeville)  
 3424 S. State Street, #324 60616  
 Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp.  
[Bickerdike.org](http://Bickerdike.org)  
 The Resurrection Project (Little Village, Pilsen)  
[Resurrectionproject.org](http://Resurrectionproject.org)  
 SouthWest Youth Collaborative [Swyc.org](http://Swyc.org)  
**National:**  
 Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (LA)  
[Saje.net](http://Saje.net)  
 Miami Workers Center [Miamiworkerscenter.org](http://Miamiworkerscenter.org)  
 Kensington Welfare Rights (Philly) [Kwru.org](http://Kwru.org)  
 Poor Peoples Economic Human Rights  
[Economichumanrights.org](http://Economichumanrights.org)  
 SF Community Land Trust [Sfclt.org](http://Sfclt.org)  
 SF Tenants Union [Sftu.org](http://Sftu.org)  
 Tenants and Workers United (Northern Virginia)  
[Tenantsworkers.org](http://Tenantsworkers.org)  
 Families United for Racial & Economic Equality (Brooklyn) [Furee.org](http://Furee.org)  
 People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (Austin) [Poder-texas.org](http://Poder-texas.org)



## Real World Protests

### Our Summer of Revolt by Josh MacPhee

It was the summer of 2001 and it had leaked that **MTV's** reality TV show **The Real World** would be taping in town. The cast and crew had occupied a building on North Avenue in the trendy and gentrified **Wicker Park** neighborhood. I was part of a group of activist artists that decided we should try to pull some sort of hoax against the show. The Real World was on the crest of corporate America's attempts to absorb youth culture in order to repackage and sell it as "real" to any teenager with a couple extra bucks in their pocket. . The fact that the show was taping in Chicago had already lead to a flurry of press, so we thought we could use this opportunity to introduce a media critique into the media. It was a perfect opportunity to intervene in the spectacle and attempt to undermine the colonization of our lives and lifestyles by multi-billion dollar corporations.

We decided to organize a confrontation, a clash between our lives as we live them and the version of life portrayed by MTV. A flyer was created and distributed throughout the city advertising an "extras" casting party and free alcohol at the Real World building Saturday, July 14th at 11pm. The flyer looked legit and listed the address of the building, which had been largely hidden from the public. We also

mobilized everyone we knew in the city to show up that night for what we promised to be the party of the year.

Our organizing must have worked; 250 plus people showed up for the party. It's difficult to say how many people were in on the joke, but likely the majority. As the 11pm party time rolled past people became more and more agitated and demanded to be let in. MTV was forced to send down someone to tell us there was no party and that we all had to leave. This just upped the energy level, it was our cue to go into action.

While members of the cast were locked up in their loft, we were having the time of our lives outside! A couple hundred people dancing, yelling, talking and making art in the street. We quickly spread out across the entire street, blocking North Ave. to all traffic. Scraps of wood and furniture were dragged out to help keep the streets clear of cars, and people started chalking and painting messages on the sidewalk. Cars were backed up for blocks in every direction since North Ave. is a major weekend thoroughfare. People started lighting fireworks and throwing bottles at the building, raising both the energy and the tension. A megaphone was produced and people took

turns attacking the show, MTV and its parent corporation Viacom. **Edmar** from Lumpen Magazine demanded MTV "Free the Real World 7" (the 7 actors on the show) and that MTV give us all the production equipment so that we could "do something real with it."

As the crowd got rowdier and rowdier, the two private security guards waded into the street to find the bottle throwers. A bucket of red paint was splashed on the door of the building, causing a small melee and pig pile of security guards and partiers. This must have been the cue for the police, and within 15 minutes they came in and broke the whole thing up. (Why they allowed us to block traffic for a couple hours is still a mystery...)

And this is where the sense of betrayal comes in. For that hour or two on the street, everyone there knew, not just intellectually, but in their bones and in their hearts, that life outside The Real World, outside MTV, outside capitalist spectacle, was far better and far more fulfilling than what we were being told our lives should be like. For those present in that moment, standing in front of the hip facade of capital, there was no comparison. Capitalism's TV dreamland was a desert, a wasteland facsimile of what we were living and how we could



live. Maybe it's a leap to call that night an insurrection, but I can only describe it as a temporary victory over the alienation that clouds our lives. Time slowed down, each moment demanded to be lived, there was no need to fast forward to the next one. This is a feeling I can't capture in words, you can't live through an insurrection vicariously.

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In hindsight maybe we could have done more, we could have tried to occupy the building, rush the door and let everyone in. Maybe we could have held it for a couple hours and the ensuing media circus and police brutality would have shut down the show, or at least made for some very strange episodes of the nightly news. How do you explain a revolt against the privatization of your very life after the fact, in the abstract? When capitalism seems to be the air we breathe, how do you make people understand those moments that seem free of it? It's hard to get someone to wrap their head around it, as witnessed by the responses to our little street party. The news media took the role of the corporations and the state, attempting to dismiss or pigeon hole the action as a simple, and misguided, protest against gentrification (of course it was clear to most involved that Wicker Park was already developed beyond the point of protest) and being concerned about the

violation of the privacy of The Real World cast (the same people on camera 24 hours a day!). Many political activists and organizers in the city took on the role of the loyal opposition, belittling the action for not being in the service of some specific marginalized group or not having some basic attainable demands (my guess is they were just jealous we had gotten far more people into the streets that they ever could).

There were attempts to hold anti-Real World protests and street parties for a couple additional weekends, but like any revolt that truly touches the source of alienation in daily life, you can't just simply repeat it, there's no blueprint or steps to retrace. The first re-run the following weekend led to an immediate assault by the police, shutting down the party before it could happen. They arrested a dozen people and beat up a handful more for good measure. We thought we could just show up and do it better than the week before, completely forgetting that we weren't the only ones that learned from our experience, the police were taking notes too. Although ultimately MTV and the city lost a civil suit by the arrestees years later, there was little liberatory that night or the weekends following. Over the course of the summer the attempts at street parties in front of the building became less and less spirited, populated by fewer and fewer people. We can't relive old moments, we need to make new ones.



## From CHAnge to CHAos By Micah Maidenberg

In late May, a group of Chicago artists hijacked an advertising campaign sponsored by the **Chicago Housing Authority (CHA)** and turned it back on the city as a vehicle for a biting critique of the CHA's controversial Plan for Transformation. The artists turned the housing authority's "CHAnge" campaign into "CHAos."

The **Plan for Transformation**, now at its midpoint, has been controversial from its start. Since the start of the 10-year, \$1.6 billion effort, CHA has demolished dozens of public housing high-rises throughout the city, and more buildings are slated to fall in the coming months. The Plan's effects are dramatically visible through the absences it has created. On near South Side, along State Street, just three buildings remain out of the 36 that stood less than five years ago. The corridor is surrounded by empty land and brown fields of grass. Most residents have used **Section 8** housing vouchers to relocate into private market housing in low-income, segregated areas burdened by preexisting social and economic problems or have moved into remaining CHA sites.

In the former public housing sites, such as those on south State street, private developers are in the process of constructing "mixed income communities" on land that once was home to thousands of the city's poorest residents. Unresolved questions shadow the new construction. Strict return criteria - drug tests, no felony convictions, work requirements, no lease violations - mean the number of public housing residents actually able to return to new housing is up in the air. Whatever the outcome, the net effect of the Plan is a dramatic contraction of housing for the city's most marginalized citizens.

In the fall of 2004, the Chicago Housing Authority rolled out a major advertising campaign about the massive changes to the city's public housing system. CHA bought \$600,000 of ad space in bus shelters, the public transit system and throughout the print media for ads featuring public housing residents lauding the Plan. Designed pro-bono by the Chicago-based **Leo Burnett** ad agency, each ad features a resident, face impassive and determined, who looks to the horizon and explains the positive changes wrought by the Plan. In one, a senior citizen says she feels "just like the buildings - all brand new." In another, **Maria Mendoza**, assistant manager at the **Bridgeport Homes** says "Everything is new, even my outlook." Resident **Charles Pinkston** says in a third that "public housing is coming to a point I hoped it would - full circle." The ads were part of a comprehensive rebranding of CHA, one that saw the agency's logo shift from a **New Deal**-style graphic of black and white hands shaking in front of high rise buildings to the simple orange "This is CHAnge" slogan, a

play on the acronym of the housing authority. CHAnge provided the artists with the lever they used to turn the agency's advertising strategy inside out.

What a difference a few letters make. On May 27 and 28, CHAos advertisements went up at prominent spots throughout Chicago. In front of City Hall, CHAos members disguised in maintenance vests and work pants, opened up privately owned bus shelter displays in the middle of the day to install ads. The process was repeated at other shelters and on the public transportation system without a hitch. No one confronted the group during public distribution, except for the occasional curious aside from a passenger on the El.

Joe, an assumed name of one of the principal organizers behind CHAos, said anonymity was an intentional part of the group's subterfuge (all the names used here are assumed ones). He said legal issues were just one reason the group wanted to maintain anonymity. By not emerging as public speakers about the campaign and Plan, the CHAos group would focus attention on the content of their ads, and the CHA's actions more broadly.

Joe said the collusion between CHA and Leo Burnett to shape public consciousness about the Plan was among the factors that moved CHAos to respond to the CHAnge campaign.

"CHAnge was trying to close the chapter, seal the deal, end dialogue around public housing. There's kind of an acknowledgement that public housing went wrong but now the Plan for Transformation is correcting it," he said. "The way the ad campaign functioned was: the Plan has started, it's going on in full gear and it's being successful. People's experiences are positive. So everything is fine."

Shelia, another member of the group observed, "the ads said all residents were glad the high rises were coming down, the management of their buildings was going really well and people were having a really good time with their Section 8s. All of those things in our research turned out to be really contentious issues and that people had a diversity of experiences with."

Members of the group said the context for the CHAos intervention was the strong trend toward privatization in Chicago. From mundane pieces of infrastructure like bus shelters now operated by the French-based company **JCDecaux** to the sale of the Skyway toll road to private investors to the new space created in public schools for private operators, private monies play a central part of local government operations. **Millennium Park**, Chicago's "new front yard" and perhaps the most visible of new projects in the city, was built with a mixture of public and private dollars, but will be closed off to the public on certain dates for corporate

fundraisers and events. The CHAos group said they see the Plan for Transformation as both related to these other instances and as transcending them in terms of its human impact. That impact, unlike Millennium Park, is largely invisible, though some news reports and academic studies have demonstrated it in clear terms. A recent **Chicago Tribune** investigation, for example, found that four in ten buildings used by Section 8 holders fail inspections, leaving voucher holders in unsafe housing.

CHAos organizers said their intervention was designed to sow doubt about the privatizations in Chicago and expose to public scrutiny the political and economic interests of those implementing the Plan for Transformation.

"We tried to be as honest as possible about what these people's interests in the Plan for Transformation are," said Phillip, another member of CHAos. "Ostensibly, the CHAnge campaign was about residents who were benefiting from the Plan. We took that at face value and talked about who was actually going to benefit."

The principals behind the CHAos campaign spent three months researching the recent history of the Plan for Transformation, talking to public housing residents, lawyers and advocates. They drew up a top ten powerbroker list and later winnowed it down to five, including Chicago **Mayor Richard Daley**, CHA CEO **Terry Peterson**, two private housing developers and **Alfonso Jackson**, the Secretary of the federal Housing and Urban Development agency. The ads are blunt: the poster of Mayor Daley poses the question "Are tourists more important than the poor?" The one of Terry Peterson asks "Do Money and Politics Mix?"-- a reference to news reports that the Chicago ward where Peterson formerly served as alderman has netted some \$250,000 in contributions from CHA contractors in spite of the fact that no CHA buildings are located there. Next to a headshot of **Daniel Levin**, CEO of the **Habitat Co**, one of CHA's private property managers at Cabrini-Green and other developments, the ad asks "Do you like forcing people out of their homes?" In the testimony space on the Levin ad, the CHAos group says that "Time after time, [Habitat] has used legal rulings and court proceedings to prevent public housing residents from moving into the new 'mixed income' buildings in their old neighborhoods."

"This information is publicly available and all of our sources can be cited. Anyone can find them if they do hours and hours of research like we did," Shelia said. "But none of this information has been presented in this particular fashion. It's our hope CHAos serves as a public resource for talking about these transformations that are happening."

"We want honest documentation of the

## The CHAos Campaign



actual experiences of people to make it into this public conversation and not have the whole thing shut down by PR money," Phillip said.

One advocate who has collaborated with public housing residents said CHAos brings a refreshing perspective to the discourse about public housing in Chicago. The prevailing discussion about CHA housing, **Jamie Kalven** said, is "stale and exhausted." Kalven, whose Web site "**A View from the Ground**" documents life at **Stateway Gardens**, said the typical public housing discourse does not "serve to frame the fundamental human rights issues implicated in the Plan for Transformation." The CHAos intervention, according to Kalven, "opens up space to ask questions about the human realities behind the slogans and advertising imagery."

"One of the ways the city exercises power is as a conceptual artist. A derelict, half-vacant public housing high rise with unsecured window openings - that's a statement. A wrecking ball hitting that high-rise is a statement. The vacant lot left by the demolition -- a blank slate awaiting 'development'-- is a statement. The city uses the built environment to make statements about public policy," Kalven said. "The CHange ads were an extension of this and it's appropriate to contest them. CHAos comes out of a different cultural space - it's canny, shrewd. As artists, they were able to break through to something essential."

**Sudhir Venkatesh**, a **Columbia University** professor and one of the foremost chroniclers of Chicago public housing and the changes rippling through it, said the CHAos campaign may remind Chicagoans about the importance of public housing redevelopment even

though many buildings are gone.

"White liberals get very upset where there's talk of a conspiracy of institutions and that institutions of government are acting consistently against people's interests," Venkatesh said. "They block that out because it's an uncomfortable thought that institutions don't serve people. People have a tendency to tune that out. This was an innovative way to keep the issue alive."

One former resident of the **Robert Taylor Homes** building at 5100 South Federal, **Janice Patton**, said she was aware of the CHange advertisements and even knew one of the persons featured on them.

"I didn't pay [CHA's ads] much attention," Patton said. "I don't pay attention to what CHA says. There wasn't anything wrong with the [CHA] buildings. They always said the residents tore up the buildings but they were the slum landlord."

CHA is not happy with the CHAos campaign. New CHange ads have already been placed in bus shelters. Chuck Levesque, deputy general counsel of CHA called the campaign "churlish" and said the agency is considering "a panoply of actions." The agency already has sent a letter to the registrant of the CHAos Web site. **Kim Johnson**, the deputy CHA press liaison, said CHAos was unfair to residents and accused the group of hurting families undergoing relocation.

"From CHA's perspective, this is a group of individuals who have taken great pains to not let themselves be known," Johnson said. "You have to wonder, what's the goal here? At the end of the day, have you helped the families? Our contention is they did not."

The CHAos organizers have stayed



anonymous several months into deployment of their ads and are now contemplating their next steps. If the CHAos ads were, as Kalven said, an exciting breakout from the typical discourse about Chicago public housing, the challenge for CHAos going forward is how to continue pushing the dialogue in new directions. The group is considering whether to distribute counter-advertisements that feature residents' experiences under the Plan, but that may slip back into the all-too-familiar dueling sets of resident testimony brought out by CHA and its critics.

CHAos started as a reaction. Its next moves may well be determined by the steps the CHA and city take.

<http://www.chicagohousingauthority.net/>

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## Protest Experiments

In the weeks leading up to a protest against the **Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue** (October 2002), the city's ears were burning with the news reports about impending violent protesting anarchists converging in the streets, with the installation of thousands of dollars worth of new surveillance technology and riot protection equipment. One television program presented video of police rehearsing for protest repression at a nearby airport. The police played the roles of themselves as well as the "protesters" - putting on full costume and aggressively chanting generic slogans. This media event characterized the current state of affairs - on the heels of the height of the anti-corporate-globalization movement and 9-11-01, the historically acceptable and conventional modes of protest had become so scripted (on the level of role-playing for the police) and control (on the level of surveillance, as well as protestor's own sense of collective possibility).

At this moment in time a feminist dance troupe was emerging, **The Pink Bloque**, who combined popular music, uniforms, spectacular dancing and agit-prop to change the social space of the protest. In response to the complete normalization of the trade meetings and their associated protest by the media, another effort included a temporary collective formed around researching the TABD and producing informative agit-prop as well as radical community-building events that would encourage decentralized street actions in the face of the highly controlled protest environment.

The following spring, another group emerged to combat the repression of dissent and pre-determined nature of protest. **Feel Tank Chicago** envisioned their role as a think-tank that focused on the inherently political dimensions of depression, and its impact on social movements. On May 1, 2003 they held their first annual **International Day of The Politically Depressed**.

Projects such as the **God Bless Graffiti Coalition** and **Department of Space and Land Reclamation** manifest as mythical entities intended to actively occupy and recoup public space and visual culture. Challenging the conventions of resistance and activism, they address major issues such as privatization and the policing of public space through methods that are often playful and ephemeral.

All of the practices presented in this section are celebrations of possibility. They highlight the need for a public sphere and remind us that democratic processes start with the ability of people to congregate, create, and make space together for dissent, or simply for celebration of life, work and play.

### Haymarket 8-Hour Action Series

#### Memories of Haymarket by Nicolas Lampert

*In Memory of Michael Piazza 1955-2006*

The Haymarket riot in Chicago emerged out of the struggle for the eight-hour workday. On May 1, 1886 a **May Day** celebration drew over 80,000 protesters in a peaceful demonstration up Michigan Avenue where it was becoming evident that factories would have to honor the workers' demands. Days later, on May third, violence erupted when police opened fire on strikers at the **McCormick Harvester Works**. The following night, on May fourth, workers gathered in **Haymarket Plaza** to condemn the bloodshed of the previous day. As the demonstration came to a close, an undisclosed person threw a bomb, killing policemen and workers alike. The ramifications of the blast would be profound. The police utilized the event to attack organized labor, eventually bringing to trial and executing some of the most significant labor leaders and anarchists in the city. For many, Haymarket would cement the division between workers and bosses, and those executed (four were hanged, one committed suicide, and three

were given prison sentences) would become martyrs to the struggle of working class people throughout the world.

In December of 2005, **Nicolas Lampert** and **Daniel Tucker** sat down with **Michael Piazza**, a Chicago-based artist and educator who has been initiating projects around the history of the Haymarket monument since 1986. Piazza was a founding member of **Axe Street Arena**, a cultural space and gallery that existed from 1985-1989 in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, at the intersection of Kimball, Diversey, and Milwaukee. Axe Street initiated a mail art show with a Haymarket theme in 1986. This interview explores some of the history and contradictions of the various public markers and art that have attempted to commemorate what happened near the corner of Desplaines and Randolph Streets 120 years ago.

#### 1986: the anniversary

**Nicolas** What happened in 1986?

**Michael** 1986 was the 100th anniversary of Haymarket, and people from all over the world came to Chicago. As far as I can tell, there was

no mainstream press about this at all—but even as something relatively underground, the police presence was extraordinary.

There was this network of events in different parts of the city. You had the Latino community that made altars to the Haymarket "martyrs." On the anniversary, there was a meeting at the site. **Utah Phillips** was there, and you had all the different unions who spoke. That was, and still is, an old parking lot on the other side of the new monument. There had been plans to make a park there, which was more of a priority from labor's side of things, whereas the anarchists didn't want a monument at all.

**N** So labor is interested in putting up a monument and the anarchists oppose the very concept of a monument. That sets up an interesting dichotomy.

**M** There was a marker there for a long time, and of course the anarchists put their symbol on it. Then the [recent] statue got built, so I don't know. There has always been conflict over how one should approach this history.

**N** I heard that in 1986 there were attempts to create guerilla monuments, and a project to create a citywide curriculum about the history of



Haymarket and May Day. Can you talk about the connection between the citywide projects and the events you did at Axe Street Arena?

**M** There was a guy named **Allan Schwartz** who was on the committee to try to tie some of these projects together. **Caza Aztlan** produced this Latino version of a memorial that was extraordinary. Our group had a mail art show at Axe Street Arena. We produced a show and a catalog of things that were coming in through the mail for our zine, **Panic**, and we opened our space for people who were coming in from out of town to crash. The whole mail art show is actually archived at **Sangamon University**, now known as **UI Springfield MEO**, with **Ron Sakolsky**. [Labor historian] **Franklin Rosemont** of **Charles H. Kerr Press** put out *The Haymarket Scrapbook* that weekend of May third in '86. That was another big thing.

**Daniel** Usually there are very small protests on May Day in Chicago. Have you seen any impressive actions on May Day?

**M** '86 was pretty good. The cops were lined up on Desplaines. There was a red flag contingent [for labor] and [an anarchist] black flag contingent, and everyone was marching in for this celebration. There were maybe 500 people there, from all over the place. Like I said, we opened up our space and there were parties and events every night around the centennial.

**N** That is significant. May Day is so marginalized in U.S. history. In Chicago, it is all that more important that the event is given prominence. In this Haymarket-themed issue of *Panic*, I noticed a story about Chicago artists participating in a Haymarket centennial show in Nicaragua. It seems like a lot of people were involved in it, including yourself, and there was also a show of prints from **Nicaragua** in Chicago.

**M** Yes. There was a lot of work that I brought back with me from a trip to Nicaragua, and there was a group that took the work down for the Haymarket show. They did the show at the San-danistan art school. Because **Elizam Escobar** [Puerto Rican political prisoner] was in the show it was also important for them; they were trying to develop a museum for Latin American revolutionary painters. Actually, all the work we sent down there is still there, and all the work they sent us is still in Chicago. It was a big deal for them to present Chicago artists showing work with some tie-in to a Haymarket theme.

#### Eight-hour action series

**N** Tell us about the **Eight-Hour Action Series**.

**M** Ever since 1972, when the statue was removed, the blank pedestal remained with only a plaque that read: "In the Name of the People of **Illinois**, I command Peace." For nearly 20 years there had been just this pedestal without a statue.

I realized that there was a division between a small group of people in town who knew what it represented, who had this local knowledge and memory, while there was a whole other group who just thought it was an empty pedestal. That always fascinated me. Finally, during the '96 **Democratic National Convention**, the entire pedestal disappeared. Different groups have been doing actions for a long time around that area.

**N** And these actions are often divorced from one other. I could go out and do an action right now at the site, and not know anything about the history of past actions carried out there. It seems like a constantly contested site.

**M** It's interesting how long the pedestal stayed up there before being removed. When it got removed, it left this 18-foot spotlight-like circle. Shortly after that, on May Day in 2001, I went by the site, and **Carlos Cortez** and **Rene Arco** pull up in a car. Arco runs out and starts stomping on the site, and I got this idea for a performance called the "Arco Stomp." I put out a call for artists, and suddenly the city comes around and cements over this circle that had been there since '96. I'm sure it was a coincidence, but it was strange.

Then, in May of 2002, the "Eight-Hour Action Series" project was initiated. The idea was to have projects that would occupy the site for up to eight hours and that would suggest the vanished history of the site.

One of our first projects was a sewing bee, where we created a large orange circle over the site. We worked all day on this sewing project, and then took a break for lunch. Javier Lara and some students from **The School of the Art Institute of Chicago** initiated that project.

The next project was by **Bertha Husband**. She placed a fake street sign right by the site of the statue. **Dara Greenwald**, **Blithe Riley** and **Lauren Cumbia** initiated this "HAY! Market Research" project with a billboard that changed statistics about women's labor. There was also a survey for passersby about Haymarket history and the site they were standing on. **Larry Bogad** came out from **Philadelphia** and did a project called "The Police Statue Returns." He started at the **Daley Center** and made his way to the site with large puppets of the police statue and **Lucy Parsons**, and walked all the way there and placed a large Anarchist flag on the site. Then there was this guy Fish who did this saxophone performance. And finally, there was a "soap box" project on the site, and people like **John Pittman Webber** of **Chicago Public Art Group** did **Eugene Victor Debs** prose readings. **Bill Adelman** also did a historical presentation.

#### 2004: the new monument

**N** Let's talk more about the recent monument that was installed in September of 2004.

**M** I heard that last May Day, a group of Colombi-





an workers went to the new monument and had an official ceremony commemorating their own labor struggles, and then installed an additional plaque. It is interesting to think that it could be used to commemorate other labor struggles and could evolve over time.

**N** I feel like the monument looks just at the event itself—the night when the bomb went off—and ignores how contested the eight-hour struggle was between the workers and the factory owners and the police. It is almost like [Picasso's] *Guernica* for Haymarket: a symbol of an event that does not explain the politics unless you are already aware of the complex history. It references the incident, but does not side with the anarchist martyrs nor with the police. It is a very safe monument.

**M** Well, even the language on the plaque frames it as the Haymarket “tragedy” and every word is chosen very carefully in that way.

**N** I am very interested in that, because it can be argued that a monument at the site is important, but this particular monument dumbs down the history to such a great extent, as well as the serious class struggles that surrounded the events. Perhaps it was preferable when it was “the police statue” and not this watered-down, in-between monument.

**M** I think that they should have just left the pedestal. It was important to see something stripped away. I was floored when it disappeared.

**D** That stripping-away you are describing sounds similar to the sites of serious political transition, as in former communist countries. There you have these partial and broken monuments, and you also have contested spaces where the monuments are entirely replaced. In **Budapest**, they gathered all the old **Stalinist** statues and put them in a sort of graveyard called “**Statue Park**,” at the edge of the city.

**M** Absolutely. This is actually why I move to these more temporary strategies of visiting and intervening, like the big orange cloth and trampoline. They’re like a monument ‘kit’ that can be folded up and brought out when needed.

**N** What are your thoughts on the new monument?

**M** I think my problem is that it is permanent. When I heard about this **Colombian** labor plaque, I thought that was really interesting because it had the potential to be more flexible.

**N** It must have been a very difficult process to even get that thing into existence.

**M** I am not sure what the process was like or

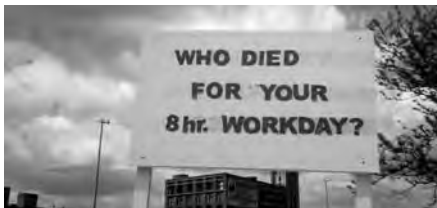
how much public input there was. I wonder if there were historians involved. I am not even sure about the art group involved, and how this thing got chosen. I wonder if there was an open call process. I would love to see a show of all the proposals for that process: No monument, many monuments, and different topics—just a real accumulation of ideas.

**N** I don’t think it is a very successful monument. It ultimately dilutes the history of the sharp division that was illustrated when the police monument was there while the workers’ monument was not even allowed within Chicago city limits. I would rather have a monument take a stance. Or perhaps two monuments on the site: one to the martyrs and the other to the police. It could be interesting to see which one is attacked more!

**M** There has even been a push to take the old police statue and put it on that site. Bill Adelman went and said, “Sure you can have the police monument, but not here.”

**N** There are some interesting threads in this discussion about the ways in which monuments reflect the political and cultural climate of the time. First you have the **Weather Underground** bombing the police statue in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Now this new monument reflects an era of apathy and is totally divorced from what happened. But there is also





the fact that the city and the police are totally resistant to putting any type of radical content into the public landscape, be it a Lucy Parsons park or this contested Haymarket site. It seems especially intense in this city. Obviously, it happens in other cities as well, but in **Milwaukee**, the city where I am from, a similar incident occurred where workers were killed over the struggle for the eight-hour day. The **Bay View Massacre** happened the day after Haymarket and consequently received less international attention. The memorial on that site, which is from the perspective of labor, has not been as contested. On the site of the massacre, a plaque and a semicircle of trees dedicated to each worker who was killed were installed by the **Wisconsin Labor History Society**. The city of Milwaukee took a less defensive stance to the memorial, but here in Chicago, any type of monument to the martyrs is perceived as a threat to the city's power structure.

**D** Those are the conditions that make these symbolic temporary monument projects necessary. The highly political way in which space is contested and policed becomes the precondition for us to initiate creative resistance in the public sphere.

**N** That's why this new monument seems to come out of nowhere. You have a really intense struggle over an issue, and then out of nowhere this watered-down monument appears.

**M** I wish I knew what the process was like. Seeing **Nathan Mason** from the Chicago **Department of Cultural Affairs** out there with these Colombian workers was interesting. With these types of struggles you never know what forces are at work or who is talking to whom.

I've heard there are some monuments about the former site of **Maxwell Street** [Market] being discussed.

The question is, how do you sensitively represent the vendors in that situation? Will the vendors who were kicked out be part of the process? It could be like the Haymarket, where the monument just appears and everything is supposed to be hunky-dory. I really don't trust monuments.

**N** The new monument is more problematic, and harder to simply attack, because it makes some gestures towards honoring labor. How does one react to it?

The symbolism of this new monument being so watered down makes the statue at the Waldheim cemetery even more important. Look at all the radicals who have decided to be buried there over the years: **Emma Goldman**, **Joe Hill** had his ashes scattered there, **Elizabeth Gurley Flynn**, **Big Bill Haywood**. The list goes on.

**M** It is kind of like Emma is surrounded by her fans. She is off in the corner, and there are all these people that want to be buried by her—it's kind of like sectarianism in the cemetery. I heard a story about how in 1986, the anarchists really went to town decorating the statue at the cemetery. So when the labor historians and academics showed up, there were black roses in her arms, and immediately there was this academic scuffle! I wish I had a picture of them duking it out and then a person ripping the black roses out of the statue's arms and replacing them with red roses. Every year they put their red roses.



For more information on Michael Piazza see [www.stockyardinstitute.org](http://www.stockyardinstitute.org)

Originally published in AREA Chicago #2 ([www.areachicago.org](http://www.areachicago.org))



### WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT GIVE GRAFTITI THE THUMBS UP



"I just wanted to tell you how much it means to see that there are people out there that understand the value of graffiti. We've paid local youth to paint the retaining wall in front of our building twice, both times they did a great job but the city came along painted over the art with brown paint! This "clean up," done without our permission, had completely demoralized both us and the local youth, but now that we know there are groups like you out there we are ready to try again."

**Betty M. Robinson**

### **Pink Bloque** by the Pink Bloque, updated by Rachel Caidor and Dara Green- wald (2005)

The ladies of the Pink Bloque initially knew each other through involvement in the punk and independent music scene, or through organizing for **Ladyfest Midwest Chicago**. Some were actively involved in radical politics; others were interested in politics but had never been active; all of us were looking for a more creative way to enact our political beliefs. We found some of the radical left's '60s protest tactics and didactic rhetoric alienating and ineffective at engaging the larger public- so we decided to make protests more fun and more visually engaging by using the sounds, images and lingo of contemporary corporate popular culture.

Many of us paid a lot of attention to [and sometimes participated in] different resistance projects like Reclaim the Streets, the **Department of Space and Land Reclamation**, **Critical Mass**, and the **Bread and Puppet Theatre**. We were inspired by their practices of taking up public space for both celebratory and political purposes. We also read a lot about

how groups ranging from the Suffragists to **ACT Up** used popular performance and culture to convey their messages to the public. In 1999 the anarchist black bloc was making news for its direct action tactics at the anti-**World Trade Organization** protests in **Seattle**. The coverage of these actions re-introduced the notion of "protest" into US popular discourse while shifting the image of a protester from 1960's hippie to 21st century anarchist. In the year 2000, thousands of protestors in pink took to the streets for the anti-corporate globalization protest surrounding the meeting of the **International Monetary Fund** in **Prague**, adding another evocative image to our notions of what protest looked like. Inspired by this spectacle, we chose to adopt pink as our signature color.

Our first date was in November of 2001 at a protest against the bombing of Afghanistan. We wore pink. There were thirty other people clad in drab colors and two wizards. We felt uninspired and ineffective. Then, in

### **God Bless Graffiti Coalition, Inc.**

The GBGC has been involved in street art advocacy since 2002. Our pro-graffiti publications, including the "Give Graffiti The Thumbs Up" brochures and "Graffiti Loves You" bible tracts, have been distributed in the tens of thousands by hand, in information kiosks, and through a system of "borrowed" newspaper boxes redecorated with our logos and messages. In addition, we organize large scale events and exhibitions, which have included hundreds of graffiti writers, street artists and supporters over the past five years.



March of 2002, we decided to step it up.

At the Pink Bloque's first official meeting, we were introduced to **Darrin Hensen**, choreographer for such popular acts as **Britney Spears** and **N'Sync**. His \$29.95 video promised to teach us to dance just like these stars! With this promise in mind, we decided that choreographed dance routines would become our protest tactic. Other important Bloque traditions materialized at this gathering: meeting and eating, finding the cutest pink clothes around, and making the streets of Chicago safe for roving dance parties. Oh yeah, and we also did the usual meeting kinds of things, like talking about process, tactics, and points of unity. The Pink Bloque decided that our approach to revolutionizing radical politics would combine cute outfits, astute social/political/economic/cultural criticism, catchy slogans inspired by pop music, and dance routines, dance routines, dance routines - in short, we brought the radical booty shake to street protest

## The 7 P's of the Pink Bloque Philosophy

**Protest - Giving the look of protest a makeover!**

**Public space - Should be for dancing and dialogue!**

**Performance - Making a spectacle to be heard!**

**Popular culture - We draw people in with familiar sights and sounds to open them up to the message of social justice!**

**Pinkness and Femme-inism - We bring femme back to feminism and activism by exploring what it means to be pink and political.**

**Party - Dance party, that is**

**Partnership - Working in collaboration towards a better and cuter world.**



and demonstrations!

The Pink Bloque had our coming out party on **May Day 2002**. We expected a huge crowd for our party, but there was a dismal protester turnout that day. We set up camp by ourselves in front of **City Hall** and started dancing to **Donna Summer's** "She Works Hard for the Money." Although we did not have a "choreographed" routine, we cart wheeled into the hearts and minds of Chicago's downtown lunch crowd and by deploying "tactical flirting" to keep police at bay, we were able to hand out flyers about wage inequality. The action was nothing like we expected...but it was a success for us despite the unfortunate camel toe pants we were all wearing. We were pleased by the crowd's reaction and so we began to plan future actions.

We decided to enlist more booties to get down - the Bloque party began to grow. At the first open meeting six new people joined. Later, as more Bloques moved away for love or school, we held a few more open meetings, which garnered us more members and consequently new friends.

With much media attention we began doing workshops and thinking up bigger and better actions. We also got out of the streets and into the classrooms and cultural centers to talk about what it was we were attempting to do. Because of these workshops and presentations we had the opportunity to articulate how our political theory and cultural practices came together to make up the well oiled dance machine that was the Pink Bloque. In the spirit of high school motivational speakers, one of our members decided a cute mnemonic device rife with wit and exclamation points would be a sure-fire way to get people to remember and internalize the motives and methods of Pink

Bloque performance theory...so we created "The Six P's", later to grow into the 7 P's.

In the summer of 2003, many of our friends in bands [i.e. **Justin Timberlake**] were setting off on tours at the same time that the US government was pushing the wack quotient in foreign and domestic policy way overboard. We decided that we would go on tour and share our love of the dance and our hate of the UnJustified US policies put forth in the **USA PATRIOT Acts 1 and 2**, **FCC deregulation**, as well as the wars in **Iraq** and **Afghanistan** and the US supported occupation of **Palestine**. We wanted to tour the East coast and complete our journey, like so many cultural and political sideshows before us, at **New York's** historical anarchist community center, **ABC no Rio!** Because we did not have major [or even indie] record labels paying for our vans or outfits, and we were not selling tickets to throngs of fans at stadiums, we had to do some serious fundraising to finance our trip.

After the tour some of us were interested in the potential for organizing larger dance actions. While continuing to do smaller, local actions we planned ahead to **The March for Women's Lives** in April 2004 in **Washington, DC** and for the **Republican National Convention** in NYC the following August. In order to facilitate a larger dance action, we put a dance instructional video on our website and promoted that people learn it and meet us first in DC and later in NYC. Many people practiced the dance from the on-line video and met us to "Take a bite out of the right!"

After spending lots of energy and resources organizing for these national actions we were all experiencing protest fatigue. We no longer wanted to stage our actions within larger, permitted demonstrations. We felt that

our autonomous actions were more effective because they contained an element of surprise. As any military strategist or "**Punk'ed**" producer can tell you, the element of surprise is key to effective tactics.

However much we wanted to continue, our energy was waning and members kept moving away or planning to move away. We talked about getting new members but no one seemed to have the energy to organize another open meeting. We finally had a "coming to Jesus" with each other in which each member had a chance to speak and say how they felt about the future of the Pink Bloque and their own ability to stay involved. Although we agreed that audiences liked what we did, some of us no longer found our tactic innovative or creative to participate in. Some members wanted to keep going and others felt that it was time to break up and start booking appearances on **The Surreal Life** along with other performance-as-protest has been. No one can claim we were drunk with success [despite occasionally being drunk with alcohol]. We weren't interested in perpetuating ourselves just because we had support. Success for us ultimately was not about recognition. Success for us was finding a way to stay politically involved and finding ways to effect social change. We are all now looking in different directions. Our final action was getting together to write this text, because if we don't write our own histories, no one will.

[www.pinkbloque.org](http://www.pinkbloque.org)



## The Department of Space and Land Reclamation

DSLRL was a weekend campaign of April 27, 28, and 29th, in 2001 that attempted to reclaim all the space, land and visual culture of Chicago back to the people who work for it, live in it and create it.

Reclamation projects, those that actively trespassed with the intent to resist, took place across the city and throughout the weekend. Whether they were spilling out of the sewers, taking the parks, invading the steps of **City Hall**, scrambling up trees or cramming the sidewalks, these projects actively engaged everyday life. A huge array of measures were

taken to infuse Chicago with the passion that a socially conscious movement demands.

The theme of this exhibition came out of discussions where we, a small collective of responsible citizens, recognized a pattern among a diverse range of art and activist practices. As the movement to resist capital and control grows to global proportions, artists/activists/radical citizens have once again found common ground. The umbrella term, reclamation, seems to encompass the wide array tactics in use. Whether this is through squatting, guerilla gardens, pirate radio, graffiti, hacking,

billboard manipulation or performative public interventions, these practices all resist the encroachment of top down centralized control and private capital. Projects of reclamation situate the producer at a critical intersection of power. It is at this nexus that we intended to position the DSLRL campaign. Important in this goal was the connecting of people with disparate practices and backgrounds. We hoped to reveal connections and energize people on the robust range of strategies that are possible.

-From Counterproductiveindustries.com/dslr

**Open call** to public space modifiers, community garden enthusiasts, militant neighborhood associations, chipper anarchists, non-frothing leftists, culture jamming nightcrawlers, graffiti painting pirates, unproductive cultural producers and monkey-wrenching toddlers. Creating a hub, or laboratory, of interconnected mayhem, the DSLRL explicitly desires the reclamation of all space, land, visuals and culture back into the hands of the people who create it, work it and live in it. DSLRL is not interested in just ART! DSLRL is interested in people taking back their lives with a wide range of approaches and methods. We want to encourage people from all walks of life who are interested in reclaiming the streets and buildings of Chicago to put in a proposal.

**Proposals due March 1st, 2001**

Please mail proposals to:  
J. MacPhee/DSLRL, POBox 476971, Chicago, IL 60647

The DSLRL Laboratory will be set up over the weekend previous to May Day, April 27, 28, and 29th. If you can come to Chicago we will try to find places for people to stay. If you have any questions at all, please email to: spaceandland@hotmail.com.





## The Manipulative City

(Reprinted from the 2001 DSLR catalogue)

*"The spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space."*

—Henri Lefebvre "Plan of the Present Work" and "Social Space" from *The Production of Space* (1974)

Global capital has reached such a point that both the physical and intellectual landscape have been completely purchased. To exist today means to tread on the property of others. The city has increasingly become a space completely built around consumerism. The freedom of expression has come to mean the freedom to advertise. Advertisements on billboards, advertisements on public buses and trains, advertisements on benches, advertisements on clothes, advertisements on radio, advertisements on television, advertisements on menus. Like a minefield of manipulative codes, urban space has been designed to maneuver us from one point of sale to the next. Racist and classist anti-loitering and anti-gang laws have been instituted across the country as increasingly individuals and cultures are illegalized to protect rising property values.

The search for greater market returns and the increased role of the "global city" in the information age has resulted in an explosion of the phenomena known as gentrification. Gentrification reveals itself in the relocation of entire lower income communities out of the now coveted inner city. Generally, artists move into a low-income area paving the way for a steady stream of "young urban professionals." Some forms of resistance to this process include community groups lobbying to retain rent controls, squatters refusing to leave their homes when they are evicted and somewhere in the North of

Chicago, a glorious vandal has been spraypainting "Yuppies go home" on the doors of new condos. (Currently a \$5000 reward is being circulated for her head).

Not only are we on borrowed land, we are also on borrowed ideas. The increased litigation over intellectual property rights has made simply the expression of ideas a nest of law suits and corporate intimidation. Whether this is in the form of patented genetically modified corn to patented AIDS medication to **Mickey Mouse**, the land of ideas has been fully purchased and commodified as well. Additionally, the entertainment industry has quickly moved in and absorbed every point of radical culture, with raves, Punk, skateboarding, and Hip-Hop rapidly dismantled into salable pieces. Selling out culture is just another example of the manner in which the creative products of culture are quickly alienated and sold back to their producers.

## Escaping the Catch-22 of Political Art

In order to develop a stronger foundation, some myths about social action must be quickly put to rest. There is a familiar rhetorical trap that occurs around the subject of political art. Artists who's work is too imaginative, reckless, wild, and beautifully useless are accused of being complicit within the structure of the status quo. Their own imagination ends up at war with the demands of their social conscience. On the flipside, artists whose work is straightforward and political are generally accused of being too didactic and lacking critical complexity. Their critic's arguments tend to quickly show themselves as protectors of the art world and capitalist status quo. In the end, it appears to be a lose/lose situation and as such, it has turned off many an artist to the demands of being political.

What is to be done? Anything looked at in and of itself will eventually resolve itself in failure. One object/practice/person/idea can not encompass all the elements which comprise a socially conscious revolutionary movement. Quite clearly, the modernist conception of art as a separate aspect from daily life fails miserably and contemporary art has yet to take this lesson to heart. In isolation all things stand alone and are mute. It is through the rich diverse fabric of collective action that private expression gains meaning.

In the DSLR campaign, a motley assemblage of activists/artists/citizens have come together to launch a robust revolutionary movement. Artists whose work may appear fanciful or hermetic in isolation now gain the strength of participating in a radical community. It is through the commitment to a larger cohesive resistance that our individual actions take shape. Once peered through this larger lens, new practices can come into focus.

The DSLR campaign will only last for this weekend, but we do not want the energy generated to dissipate. We encourage everyone to join in on the **May Day** events this Tuesday and to attend our follow-up discussion and showing of the DSLR video documentary on June 9, 2001 at the **Stockyard Institute** 4741 S. Damen Avenue. We are quite serious in the belief that projects of reclamation both connect us in a struggle for social justice and also provide a blue print for more dynamic modes of existence. DSLR hopes these actions will help foster a community in Chicago that is readily equipped to articulate the problems here and to move forward on collaborative, creative interventions for the future. We believe our compass is pointing in the right direction. Take to the streets. Take back what is ours. Overthrow the systems of capital and control!





## Feel Tank Chicago



**"DEPRESSION IS OUR CALL TO ACTION BRING YOUR MEDS WEAR YOUR ROBES AND SLIPPERS ALL (LEGAL) FORMS OF SELF-MEDICATION WELCOME. WE'RE DEPRESSED. WATCH OUT!"**



### MEDIA ALERT:

To Commemorate **The First Annual International Day Of The Politically Depressed** Feel Tank Chicago hosts a Parade and Depress-In(1)  
 Where: Outside the State of Illinois Building (aka the **James R. Thompson Center**, at the corner of Clark and Randolph, near Clark/Lake El)  
 When: Thursday, May 1, 2003, 4-6 pm

In solidarity with May Day(2), Feel Tank Chicago(3) proclaims the First Annual International Day of the Politically Depressed. We're overwhelmed by the detritus(4) of political life around us: A new bloody occupation in the Middle East. Giant tax cuts for corporations and the rich. 40 million uninsured. **Ashcroft**.... Toxic environments. Racial profiling. The unliving wage. Endless war. **Guantanamo. Kissinger**.... **Enron. American Airlines**. Hounding of immigrants. **Rumsfeld**.... Dissent=treason? Dissent=terrorism? The evisceration of state budgets. The (in)justice system. **Santorum**.... Orange alerts. The de-funding of public education. Media monopolies and the squelching of debate. Rampant militarism. Fox News. WMDs? What WMDs? Habeas corpus? What habeas corpus? How DID we get out of bed this morning?

Feel Tank Chicago is a group of local activists, artists, and academics who are part of an international movement to analyze and counter the orchestration of public feelings in the political sphere. Depression is a political emotion. Apathy is a response. We're numbed, flooded, saturated, overwhelmed -- we're DEPRESSED -- we're politically depressed.

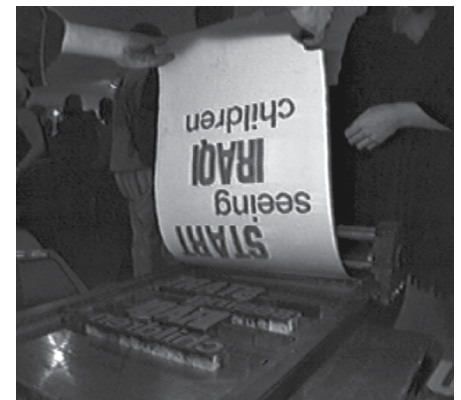
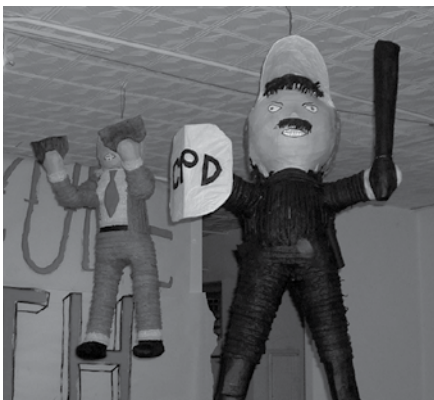
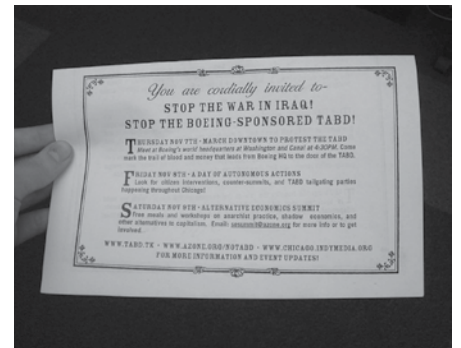
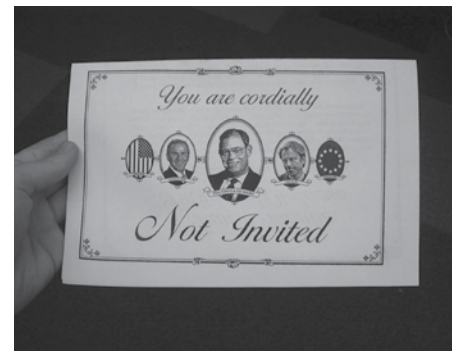
Notes: 1. In the long tradition of teach-ins, sit-ins, kiss-ins, die-ins, barf-ins, and napk-ins. 2. Cancelled in China due to SARS. 3. [www.feeltankchicago.net](http://www.feeltankchicago.net) 4. Flotsam, jetsam, fallout, garbage, waste, trash, junk, shards, sweepings





## Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue

Hidden from public scrutiny and armed with the protection of the **Chicago Police**, the **Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue** (TABD) Conference brought together large European and North American corporations with high-level government officials to develop the public policy of corporate globalization and set the agenda for the WTO. An ad-hoc group researched and produced educational media for the mobilization, including the "Trans-Atlantic Business Monologue" wheatpaste poster and a bilingual TABD "disinvitation". They distributed hundreds of CEO Vampire Teeth to police and protesters and followed the actions with a raucous Business vs. Pleasure wrestling and pinata party.





## Social Reorganization

Day after day, we are ruthlessly caught up between an interpersonal alienation of our working and living conditions and an increasing shrinkage of viable public spaces, and the overwhelming mediation of information as it flows through corporate and state command. Is it no wonder then that we are desperate to imagine a 'commons'; for alternative social spaces and alternative production models built with mutual aid, dialogue, solidarity, and diversity at their core. In the post-9/11 years in Chicago, many interesting social spaces, both permanent and temporary, were launched for local network-building and open information and resource sharing. A few of these include the **Pilot TV** convergence, the celebration of local groups known as The **Autonomous Territories of Chicago**, the ongoing carnival of open-ended dialogue known as **Ask-Me!**, and the resource sharing science-fair known as **INFO-eXPO**. While more sustainable long-term spaces are of needed for social movements to thrive, these temporary experiments all helped to build new relationships, cross-pollinate practices, and imagine alternative models for communication, learning, media production, distribution, and economic reorganization.

### Pilot TV: Experimental Media for Feminist Trespass



PILOT TV is a hybrid activist convergence taking the form of a do-it-yourself television studio. We invite you to take part in 4 days and nights of participatory, creative problem-solving to rethink how we "stage" protest. Help us turn this three-story Chicago building into a fully functioning Hollywood studio, replete with fantastical sets, collaborative crews, and improvised madness.

Stage a panel discussion as a talk show, lead a workshop as a cooking show, get behind a camera, sew a costume, party all night, or just show up and get involved in the conversation. PILOT will be an open-ended space for those of us involved in the global anti-capitalist movement to come together in sweat-space, build momentum, and strategize our biopolitical resistance on (and off) camera.

As the last vestiges of public space, natural resources, and community-control are bought-off; our bodies will continue to be the final line in the struggle for autonomy. Join us at the PILOT laboratory for 4 days of fleshy resistance, aesthetic experiments and tactical performance! Trespass the corporate control of media with nomadic TV, pirate radio broadcasts, and guerilla drive-in screenings! Enjoy parties, community meals, and do things on camera that you could never do legally in real life!

--From the original call for participation



## Building a Temporary Autonomous TV Studio by Emily Forman and Daniel Tucker

editor's note: *This text appeared in Issue #4 of the Journal of Aesthetics and Protest and Sections of this article were originally published in Clamor Magazine*

Imagine a three story media production studio that appears for one weekend, brings hundreds of queer and feminist independent media producers together for the video taping and staging of their own "television shows," talk shows, historical reenactments and skill-sharing workshops. In October, Pilot TV did just this by creating a unique space for collaboration, asking questions and building community in a wonderful and experimental temporary autonomous television studio.

**Daniel** So where did the idea for Pilot come from?

**Emily** Well, in initial conversations between another organizer, James Tsang, and myself, we kept throwing around this word, this idea of "Transfeminism." We were excited that it had no set definition and thought it might have some possibility in terms of encompassing a wide variety of new feminist concerns (and old concerns as well, like the idea that biology shouldn't control your destiny...) Our conversations about defining transfeminism quickly multiplied into all these other slogans and exclamations of our desires for "Body Flight!" and "Feminist Trespass!" against biopolitical control and capitalism. Our basic idea was that we should

work out these questions with our peers in a productive, performative, open-ended space. It eventually was settled that we would call people from across the continent to come and take part in a weekend of collaborations producing feminist television "pilots," which would then be edited, compiled, and redistributed back to all participants so they could distribute them on their local public access channels, schools, or microcinemas wherever they live. This would also have the effect of building a new network of anti-capitalist transsexuals, queers, and feminist media producers for possible future action.

**D** Can you mention some of the models, other events and projects that Pilot was inspired by?

**E** Pilot was moved to build a horizontal production space that could feed into, and in some ways differ from the incredible horizontal distribution networks created by the global Indy-media movement. We were inspired by projects like **DIVA TV**, **Deep Dish** and **Paper Tiger**, as well as lesser-known histories of queer, feminist, and collective media activism such as the **Videofreex** and **Raindance Corporation**. In addition to those influences, we decided that Pilot should take the best aspects of both a protest convergence center and a Hollywood tv studio.

The thing that is so exciting about these convergence/hub spaces that develop during large protests is that they become these participatory sweat-spaces where all sorts of interactions are possible and are activated just by filling a room with people, resources, and passions. We imagined that this potential for collective self-realization would be multiplied if we threw the variables of a TV studio (sets,

props, cameras) into the mix. I find often that the experience of engaging in a convergence center is a lot more meaningful, both personally and politically, than the foregrounded "protest" itself. These are places where people are coming together, teaching each other, sharing workshops and food, housing each other and practicing direct democracy.

**D** Another element in the Call for Participation mentioned that Pilot was an event to rethink how we (as activists) "stage protest." How do we stage protest? How can an experimental event format like Pilot inform how we protest?

**E** Looking at protest as something that is "staged" as opposed to natural allows you to be strategic in how you interrogate the meaning and effectiveness of a collective action. Consider that "demonstrations" are just that; mass performances where we demonstrate this fairly scripted scenario where people march, hold signs, reach catharsis, scuffle with police, hold candles, etc. In fact, this performance is so well scripted that police agencies often "rehearse" it, casting undercovers in our roles, and compensating for any 'improvising' we may try to do.

Clearly what needs to happen is a total rethinking of the project of social protest and what we do with the agency of collectives. The premise during Pilot was to make this performative nature transparent in order to open it up for poetic, aesthetic, and practical restaging. We shared a really wide array of possibilities with each other; from direct political interventions like the **Women on Waves** pirate abortion ship to the intimate performance of **John and Yoko's** "Bed-In" against the war in **Vietnam**.

**D** There were more than 35 different “shows” that were taped during the weekend including a talk show called “Feeling good about feeling bad” which focused on the experience of political depression, a performative lecture by the **Society for Biological Insurgents**, and a genderqueer erotic remake of the 1925 **Eisenstein** film **Battleship Potemkin**. Considering all of the kinds of shows that happened during the weekend, what were people trying to figure out?

**E** We were trying to educate each other about the incredibly rich history of feminist media activism, and some of the early utopian proposals for what video and television might be. The popular meaning of feminism has been whittled down to these very narrow clichés, but in fact it is a set of essential tools for ethical social practice and resistance to patriarchy, hierarchy, and capitalism. As far as trans-feminism relating to media democratization, we didn’t privilege either one as a concern. We saw them as coexistent and interdependent struggles. I guess it is on this level that feminism most strongly informs anti-capitalist movements today. Our concern during the weekend was about doing activism from the level of the body up. Starting with how we meet our basic needs for food or healthcare, up to things like how we resist oppressions based on race, citizenship, gender, or sexuality, our position as laborers and consumers in the global economy, the importance of feelings, the bodies made up by our families, communities, and cities.

**D** The founding document that you sent out read, “Calling all trans-activists, women, queers, male feminists, media activists, intersexed hackers, radical educators, genderchangers, direct-actors, performance artists, anti-racists, mothers, documentarians, prop collectors, youth video collectives, squatters, fence-climbers, cyber-feminists, urban farmers, prison abolitionists, women’s health-care providers, all-girl graffiti crews, resistant bodies and trespassers of all kinds !!!” Did that happen?

**E** Well I am not sure if there were actually any intersexed individuals who were also “hackers”, but basically yes. It felt unlike any other activist convergence or media context I’ve ever been in, in the sense that the majority of people participating and coordinating technology were all women, or had at one point been a woman, or were becoming women!

**D** So you have talked about the ways in which Pilot responded to the conference and protest models of social space, but what about the

**Hollywood** influence? When I rode my bike down to **Bridgeport** (the neighborhood in Chicago where Pilot took place), I came across a huge sign on the hill by the highway reading “PILOTWOOD.” Hollywood is a pretty messed up place in a lot of ways, how did it serve as inspiration?

**E** Well, it’s inspiring in the sense that there is so much symbolic wealth there! As a **LA** native I really think people need to be fucking with the spatial referents remaining in Hollywood, you know, like staging takeovers and sit-ins at news stations, or doing direct actions in the guise of a movie shoot. In terms of Pilot, the main thing we were appropriating was the **Fordist** vertical-integration model of media production, where everything happens “in-house.” While production has been decentralized incredibly, there is still this phenomena where tons of skilled individuals with cameras, lights, scripts, and makeup will come together into one building in the morning and at the end of the day a television show will come out. For Pilot we borrowed this myth of the Hollywood studio and got rid of the unnecessary hierarchical divisions between producers, directors, actors, and audience members.



One of the problems we encountered was that there just wasn’t enough set up and breakdown time for people to shoot 9 TV shows a day, even with the three sets we had. Because of this there wasn’t enough time for the education of people with less technical expertise, so hierarchies of knowledge were set up due to a sped-up production schedule. Some of the problems at Pilot can be worked out in future events. And there did seem to be a big interest on the part of participants in making that happen. Maybe it will turn into a more permanent studio, or possibly a mobile production house like the soviet cinema trains.

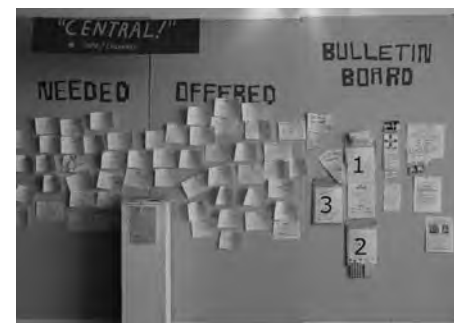
**D** In terms of the actual productive capabilities of Pilot, it would be helpful if you could elaborate on the different ways in which resources were pooled and technology was acquired. Did Pilot have fundraisers or grants?

**E** No, we didn’t have any grants but we raised maybe a hundred bucks and built community prior to the event with a call-out zine and CD, conversations, show-and-tells, and a weekly speakeasy restaurant that we ran out of various apartments called the **Secret Café**. Quite a bit of the A/V equipment was acquired through a parasitic technique where individuals with access privileges at jobs or art schools worked together to leverage large chunks of equipment for everyone during the weekend. Meanwhile, everyone who came contributed some kind of resource to the pool, whether it was their construction skills or their DV camera or their wig collection.

**D** And in the end?

**E** Pilot proved that it is possible build a TV studio without ANY money whatsoever, that with self-organization and collective resource sharing we can build alternative infrastructures that are equally as fantastic and sustainable as anything made for the traditional capitalist economy! All in all, the weekend was an incredibly packed and complex experience. It was marked by lots of improvisation, pleasure, dialogue, public sex, failure, creative television production, skill sharing, and countless new relationships. I can’t speak for the rest of the Pilot participants, but I know I experienced community the way I would like it to be everyday; queer as fuck, and experimenting together ...for all the trespassing to come.

[www.pilotchicago.org](http://www.pilotchicago.org)





# AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES OF CHICAGO

## A FESTIVAL IN CELEBRATION OF RADICAL CULTURE AND RESISTANCE

Come share your skills, knowledge & voices! Meet local groups who operate creatively outside the cage of capitalism! Stake your claims on a Chicago liberated from state & corporate control! Join activists, artists & self-determining citizens as we seek new meanings in the events of 9/11 and confront the dominant racist & war-mongering public discourse.

OCT. 14, 2001 \* 11AM-10PM

HYDE PARK ART CENTER

5307 S. HYDEPARK BLVD.

DEL PRADO BUILDING

INDEPENDENT MEDIA • FORNAGE • BIKER RETAIL  
ROBOTS • PIRATE RADIO • PROPAGANDA  
FEAST OF FORGIVENESS • ANARCHY  
GAMES • RADICAL TEACHERS • BOOKS  
UNDERGROUND MAPS • DISPUTE



### The Autonomous Territories of Chicago (ATOC)

ATOC was a project planned for a traditional gallery (the **Hyde Park Art Center**) and one of the few examples in this book of a project with funding, in this instance through a \$1000 grant from the Chicago **Department of Cultural Affairs**. The idea behind ATOC was simple, invite a number of different art, activist, and community groups doing exciting work around Chicago to come to a utopian carnival and fair and pretend they were Autonomous Territories, i.e., what would their practice look like if they were not under the heel of the city, state or capitalism. Unfortunately right before all of this was to come together September 11th happened, and felt the program had to be altered. Still six booths or stands were built for groups to present their utopias (including God's Gang, who brought live chickens and a rooster!), but the carnival was also designed around distributing alternative information about September 11th, the **Bush** regime, and what was actually happening in the **United States** and **Afghanistan** at that time. A giant 40 foot long flow chart was painted on the wall which presented connection between government officials, corporations, guns, money and drugs. Packets of alternative info were handed out as DJ's spun records, a rooster crowed, poets read, and people learned how to post their own news on Indymedia.

Groups present included **Gods Gang**, **Temporary Services**, **Haymarket 8 Hour Action Series**, **Stockyard Institute**, Chicago **Indymedia**, **Nance Klehm's** food foraging tour, **Labor Donation Bike Repair**, and **People's Republic of Delicious Food**.



## ASK ME!

For this interactive installation, **Gallery 2** will become the site of a large social situation that could be experienced as performance art, living theater, a happening, social fair or swap meet. ASK ME! promotes the exchange of information simply for the types of engagement, exchange and pleasure that can be realized with face-to-face communication. The ASK ME! exhibit will consist of 15 information booths attended by friendly, talkative people who are eager to discuss specific topics with the audience members who approach them. Their areas of expertise will represent a range of approaches to knowledge (scientific, historical, cultural, psychological, theoretical, personal, experiential) and methods for its acquisition (professional, academic, personal, hobby, obsession, fandom). By equalizing various types of "expertise" (e.g., empirical research and bodily experience) this exhibit offers a consideration of what constitutes a body of knowledge and how it is defined, determined and valued.

Participants will have a highly individual experience based on what they are curious about, how they direct themselves through the exhibit, how they assimilate the experience as a whole, and what problems or questions it raises for them. The experts and the audience will create the piece, which is a self-directed set of curated conversations. In this sense, the project has a high degree of indeterminacy and will be experienced and valued in singular ways. However, this sort of multifaceted, unpredictable exchange between people may be a context to reflect upon how we come into contact with new knowledge, what type of public forums we participate in, for making comparisons between interpersonal and mass-mediated forms of communication, and for appraising our rapidly changing routes of information delivery. Each booth will be clearly labeled by subject matter and equipped with ice-breaker questions to help people navigate topics that they are less familiar with. For example:

Ask me what it is like to be a professional dominatrix!

Ask me why it is possible to travel into the future but not the past!

Ask me why the Klan blew Robert E. Lee's head off of Stone Mountain in 1927!

Ask me about the life and teachings of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)!

Ask me how to scan your body for stored traumatic memories!

Ask me what yoga has in common with early film technology!

Ask me how US corporations and Saddam Hussein are benefiting from the sanctions against Iraq!

Audience members are also encouraged to station themselves at the blank booth, declare a subject category of their own, and field questions in their own area of expertise.

--from the original ASK ME! project proposal



ASK ME! was organized in 2001 by **Laurie Jo Reynolds** at Gallery 2 and co-curated with **Mary Patten** at the **1926 Exhibition Studies Space**. In 2003, it was presented by **Chicago County Fair** at the **Chicago Cultural Center** and then commissioned by the **Museum of Science and Industry**. ASK ME! participants have included a quantum physicist, a professional dominatrix, a WWII conscientious objector, family members of **Tamms Supermax** prisoners, an organic farmer, an intersex activist, a video artist, a labor history professor, a sleep researcher, a dialect coach, a mixologist, an imam, blind people, and a four-year old Power Ranger enthusiast. ASK ME! subjects have included the Stone Mountain Confederate monument, IQ and SAT testing, sexual abuse and body memory, cosmology, midwifery, pre-MTV televised soul music, the ether, time management, Pullman porters, pirate radio, prairie restoration, plane crashes and the inner ear, the sanctions against Iraq, monster trucks and free unprofessional advice.





## NFO-XPO Networking Fair



### MEDIA ALERT:

**VERSION>04 invisibleNetworks** Media Festival presents

**iNFO eXPO:** Arts and Activist Information Fair at the **Chicago Cultural Center**  
78 E. Washington, Chicago IL 60602

April 28 and 29, 2004 11-2pm on Both Days

Not satisfied by online contact? Want to meet people doing radical art in Chicago and from other cities? The Nfo Xpo networking fair offers an opportunity for you to meet art and activist collectives from Chicago, representatives of other cities and people with ideas who are initiating exciting new projects. This face to face networking opportunity allows you to meet other artists working in your field and to ask people questions directly.

Learn about new projects going on in your own city and elsewhere! Share resources! Meet possible collaborators! The iNfo eXpo Networking Fair (pronounced "Info Expo") will feature a wide variety of projects and practices that range from a mobile public reading room to a presentation on the future of transportation in Chicago's SouthEast side.

Through the simple presentation format of a booth, based on a science fair model, we will facilitate straight-forward exchanges about what is going on locally in various communities, from different disparate neighborhoods, to other American cities and friends from far away visiting Chicago for Version>04. Over twenty-five artists and collectives will have presentation booths: **16 beaver Group, Angels of Def, Animal Factory, Antigravity, Bikecart Infoshop and Open Air Public Reading Room, Cabalster, Carbon Defense League, Champaign Urbana IL, Chicago Indymedia, Chicago Gray Line, Children's Studio Presents, Chris Wildrick, Chronozone 2, College of Complexes, Cooperative Image Group, Drag Kings, FeelTank Chicago, Films and Cities, Free Walking, Genewise, Gentrification Game, Grand Rapids Michigan, Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, Locus, Lumpen, Microrevolt, The Network of Casual Art A/V Dept., The Neighborhood Writing Alliance, Las Non Gratas Class, Quimby's, Red 76 Arts group, The Stockyard Institute, Temporary Travel Office, Toyshop Collective, Pilot TV, VersionFest, and We The People Media.**

The NFO XPO is being presented as part of Version>04: invisibleNetworks. Version>04 is a hybrid form of festival, conference, arts fair taking place throughout Chicago from April 16- May 1st, 2004. The festival, in its third year, is an experimental approach at navigating, presenting and discussing the activities of emerging cultures that combine visual arts, activism, social practices, creative use of new technologies as well as tactics of public intervention. For more information go to: [www.versionfest.org](http://www.versionfest.org)

## What is Urban Planning? Who Plans? What Remains Undone? by Ava Bromberg

*"...the vision of new possibilities requires only the recognition that scientific discoveries can be used in at least two opposite ways. The first leads to specialization of functions, institutionalization of values, and centralization of power and turns people into the accessories of bureaucracies or machines. The second enlarges the range of each person's competence, control and initiative, limited only by the other individual's claims to an equal range of power and freedom." - Ivan Illich Tools of Conviviality*

Before I reflect on what urban planning is and what it could be, who plans and for what purpose, I would like to call attention to a few things:

- 1) We have never had a right to housing in the United States.
- 2) We all deserve decent shelter, access to healthy food, a chance to learn and engage with diverse forms of knowledge, to have a say in the decisions that shape our environments, to earn a living that we can stand, to root ourselves and our families somewhere if we so please, to explore our potential and articulate our needs and desires in our own voice.
- 3) Not to have access to these is unjust.
- 4) To secure equal access to these will require a massive shift in how we conceive and activate our inexorably linked "political-economies" at every scale (from the body and the home, to the street corner, the neighborhood, the city, the region and beyond the boundaries of nation-states.)
- 5) As the projects in this volume, and recent scholarly writings make plain, under neoliberal capitalism, "urban governing institutions have been restructured so that they can better respond to the needs of capital. They are becoming less a democratic forum for citizens to make decisions and more a tool to ensure the area competes effectively for capital investment." (1) Examples in Chicago and elsewhere abound. It is within this unsatisfactory and unjust inherited condition that our work begins.
- 6) The real living conditions of people already settled somewhere – and our basic right to dwell, to inhabit the city, should be more important and powerful than a promise of profit from a potential population that does not yet exist. Pushing the (economically) weaker to the wall, or, in the case of displacement, always to a further edge of the city is unsustainable as well as unjust.
- 7) And if we want to change this? We might, as **Mark Purcell** suggests, move forward in demanding the necessary shift by activating a deep understanding of what **Henri Lefebvre** called the "right to the city," which, "conceived of more generally," Purcell argues, "as the right

to inhabit – the right to participate centrally in the decisions that shape one's everyday life.... opens the door to a new citizenship and a new politics in which the decisions that produce space are made through deliberation among inhabitants, rather than through negotiation between capital and the state." (2) He goes on to say that while such participation does not, "necessarily guarantee a more just political economy. It does, however, point to a more democratic politics in which the current control of capital is undone, and a vibrant debate among inhabitants engages fundamental questions about the structure and purpose of global political economy." (3)

### What is Urban Planning?

With these points in mind, we can turn to the field of urban planning. It is useful to talk about planning because the landscape we've inherited is how we know what remains undone, and – at some point – elements of this landscape were on a planner's desk. Planning operationalizes whatever "structure and purpose of the global political economy" is being enacted, whether decided upon democratically or not). Thus, even if we cannot agree from the start whether planning is a site of intervention, we can mine its knowledge, histories, and operating logics before we decide.

To glaze too briefly over multiple histories that deserve more attention: ideas about planning have their roots in anarchist and utopian socialist thinking of the mid-late 1800s but – even from its early beginnings – planning in practice has never successfully challenged dominant notions of private property. And although there have been attempts to use planning (particularly regional planning) to achieve a more even distribution of social costs and benefits (mainly during the **Keynesian** moment of state welfare), its processes have been readily employed to aid in the consolidation of capital, consistently privileging profit maximization over the needs of residents.. While volumes of **Marxist** and neo-Marxist analysis call into question the very possibility of "more even" distribution within a capitalist system for which uneven development is a function of the basic structure of wealth accumulation, it is equally important to note that planning – for all its faults and failures– remains one of the few possible sites of powerful interference in development. City planners can create wildly expensive delays for developers, just as city officials can halt progress on a project that does not provide sufficient community benefits. It is perhaps the hallmark of the neoliberal city, however, that problematic projects are often pushed through more quickly by the same public servants. Under the rationale where stimulating private investment and devel

opment is the goal, cities want to keep costs down for the developer and get projects built faster in order to maximize the revenue stream for the city. In this climate, we have the dual challenge of showing that the economic logic is flawed and unjust while applying the necessary political pressure as we assert our basic right to the city. If we see the city as starting point for activating justice broadly, then a radical agenda may be best served by acknowledging that development is inevitable. Development happens and it impacts us all in direct and indirect ways. So we don't simply have to contest it, we have to change the way it works, how decisions are made, and whose interests get developed.

### Their Planning

There is every indication on the landscape that most city and private sector planners proceed unquestioningly to fulfill the desires of the paying client; they operationalize the same logic of creating ever more efficient and profit-maximizing systems that characterizes neoliberal projects broadly. That is clear enough from reading most major city's strategic plans, from looking at what practicing planners are trained to do, and examining the conditions that projects on these pages respond to.

Yet I am struck by an unmistakable (and under-interrogated) irony in the post-Keynesian urban landscape. It is often asserted that, in the absence of federal funding for social programs, cities have had to adopt "entrepreneurial" strategies to raise revenue to perform basic (and we might (wrongly?) assume) social functions. Cities make concessions to encourage large-scale developments like **Millennium Park**, or to enable the **Chicago Housing Authority's "Plan for Transformation"**. Cities compete with each other, offering major corporations tax breaks to relocate their headquarters to their city (**Boeing**, for example). They choose to maximize retail square footage in new developments even where housing is in short supply because of the increased potential for revenue from retail space. City marketing, stadium construction, and most recently, catering to the preferences of the so-called "creative class" have begun to dominate the visioning process for many city managers and planners. Yet I feel the entire project warrants serious reassessment if, in the process of raising revenue, cities forsake (or displace) the individuals and communities they are ostensibly supposed to be raising money to support in the first place. (And they do). If we have lost sight of (or collectively ignore in the neoliberal city) that behind urban strategies and the social programs they fund are real people, not just protocols, then I suggest we all revisit this very basic starting point.



## Our Planning

Radical planning, a concept articulated by **John Friedmann**, calls for nothing short of the broad transformation of society and social relations – through the accumulation of small acts that empower individual citizens, and the critical interrogation of structures and conditions that disempower them. This idea informs many of the organized, locally rooted and globally networked efforts to attain more just environments within or parallel to the dominant modes and processes of planning. For Friedmann, planners' work rests at a juncture of theory and practice. They bring particular knowledge of mobilization skills, facility with group process, knowledge of theory, and experience to the task at hand. But they seek to come to the table as equals, challenging the usual hierarchical power relations in practice. There is an important insistence on social learning, on knowledge built and acquired by a mobilized group that builds actively on experiences and practices. Knowledge is co-produced through experience, instead of professionally garnered as it is with the rational model of planning. Still there is room – and necessity – to advance these ideas in practice through broader political engagement in the decision-making that shapes our cities.

We inherited this landscape, but we are around for the new ones being built constantly. We have ideas and visions of a better world, of micro and macro utopias. They are not crazy. They are certainly no crazier than the utopian

vision upon which neoliberalism is predicated, wherein: "the law of the market is presumed to operate in the same way, and with essentially the same effects, no matter where it is unleashed, leading in turn to economic stability, convergence, and equilibrium." (4) Is it any wonder that places applying the same oversimplified formula begin to look and feel the same? Those operating in the neoliberal tradition must work very hard to make their utopia look attainable. We have to work hard not to play into their hands – to reconstitute the frame within which we act, organize, and plan, even as we engage with it.

- 1) Purcell, Mark. "Urban Democracy and the Local Trap" pg. 6. (in press) download available at: <http://faculty.washington.edu/mpurcell/urbstud.pdf>. See also Brenner, N. and N. Theodore. 2002. Cities and the geographies of "actually existing neoliberalism." *Antipode* 34(3): 349-379.
- 2) Purcell, Mark. "Citizenship and the Right to the Global City: Reimagining the Capitalist World Order. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 2003. 27(3): 564-590 p. 583.
- 3) Ibid. p 584
- 4) Brenner, N. and N. Theodore. 2002. Cities and the geographies of "actually existing neoliberalism." *Antipode* 34(3): 349-379. Endnote 1, p. 377

## Conclusion

The projects presented here offer a glimpse into a moment in time when multiple groups, temporary collectives and organizations were actively contesting the givens of daily life in Chicago. That work did not end when this publication was compiled, and the approaches here are presented to provide an introduction and history to ways of working that have continued even stronger today.

To get involved in work that is going on today in Chicago, check out online resources like Chicago **IndyMedia** (<http://chicago.indymedia.org>), and **AREA Chicago Art/Research/Education/Activism** ([www.areachicago.org](http://www.areachicago.org)).

## Resources and Further Reading

### Public/Social/Collective Art

*Mapping the Terrain* by Susan Lacy  
*One Place After Another* by Mi Won Kwon  
*Culture in Action* by Mary Jane Jacob, Michael Brenson and Eva M. Olson  
*The Interventionists* by Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette (ed.)  
*Collectivism After Modernism* by Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette (ed.)  
*Collective Creativity* by What, How and for Whom? (ed.)  
[Justseeds.org](http://Justseeds.org)  
[Visualresistance.org](http://Visualresistance.org)  
 Social Design Notes, [Backspace.com/notes](http://Backspace.com/notes)  
[Republicart.net](http://Republicart.net)  
[Transform.eipcp.net](http://Transform.eipcp.net)

### Critical Urbanism

[Criticalspatialpractice.blogspot.com](http://Criticalspatialpractice.blogspot.com)  
[Spacing.ca](http://Spacing.ca)  
[Infiltration.org](http://Infiltration.org)  
[Americancity.org](http://Americancity.org)  
[Military Urbanism Subtopia.blogspot.com](http://MilitaryUrbanismSubtopia.blogspot.com)  
[Sarai.net](http://Sarai.net)  
*Making Their Own Plans* by In The Field (ed.)

### Activism/Political Theory

[Tangent University U-tangente.org](http://TangentUniversityU-tangente.org)  
[Autonomea.org](http://Autonomea.org)  
[Sindominio.net/karakola/precarias.htm](http://Sindominio.net/karakola/precarias.htm)  
[Leftturn.org](http://Leftturn.org)  
[Indymedia.org](http://Indymedia.org)  
[Ephemeraweb.org](http://Ephemeraweb.org)  
[Noborder.org](http://Noborder.org)  
[Info.interactivist.net](http://Info.interactivist.net)  
[Lutherblissett.net](http://Lutherblissett.net)  
*We Are Everywhere* by Notes from Nowhere  
[Peoples Global Action, Agp.org](http://PeoplesGlobalAction.org)  
[Greenpeppermagazine.org](http://Greenpeppermagazine.org)  
[Wumingfoundation.com](http://Wumingfoundation.com)  
[Situaciones.org](http://Situaciones.org)  
[Euromovements.info](http://Euromovements.info)

### Huge Amazing Links Pages

[Theoctobersurprise.org/eng/resources.html](http://Theoctobersurprise.org/eng/resources.html)  
[Investigaccio.org/](http://Investigaccio.org/)  
[Cactusnetwork.org.uk/inspiration.htm](http://Cactusnetwork.org.uk/inspiration.htm)

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Edited by **Emily Forman** and **Daniel Tucker**.  
Designed by **Dakota Brown** and Daniel Tucker.

Additional contributors include **Ava Bromberg**, **Pauline Lipman**, **Micah Maidenberger**, **Josh MacPhee**, **Laurie Palmer**, the **Pink Bloque**, and **Laurie Jo Reynolds**. The editors feel passionately that the collective energy and social relations produced during and after these projects took place is their biggest achievement. We wish to pay respect to the hundreds of people who interacted with the projects presented here.

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\*Cover photo: "The Trash Ball" being rolled down Michigan Ave. "Magnificent Mile" by the group Men & Women for the Department of Space and Land Reclamation (April 2001).

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