

**Lost in Translation:
Percent-for-Art**

By Hannah Hull

For my Mum,
Aunty Sarah and Uncle David

Special thanks to Vincent

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Introduction

In this dissertation I will be taking a closer look at the relationship between the public realm and art, specifically the relationship between public funding and artistic autonomy. My interest in this subject stems from my own Public Art practice. It is my concern that artists are able to work in the public realm without compromising the artistic merit of their work. In this sense, I am interested in how an artist can retain a form of autonomy when producing works within the politics of this realm.

Throughout my experience as an artist, many socially-engaged practitioners have been brought to my attention. And although from diverse fields and backgrounds, many share a similar ethos. Unaware of one another, I staged a seminar for several of these practitioners to discuss similarities and differences in their work. Specialisms represented included design, theatre, architecture and art¹. All participants noted compromises made in realizing publicly funded projects. This seemed an issue of language – of translation. A language comprising of the politics of the public realm and this realm's expectations of creative practice is being imposed during the commissioning process. Modernist autonomy rejects art's involvement in the public realm on the basis of this apparently unavoidable predicament.

Through historical comparison, I aim to unravel the language used in the funding of Public Art. This language is shaping the current climate of Public Art, a climate which it hotly debated and largely criticized. I will plot the development and establishment of this language by dissecting *Percent-for-Art* schemes. *Percent-for-Art* schemes are implemented in-house by Local Authorities. Local Authorities are heavily entrenched in the politics of the public realm, and therein these schemes provide a clear example of the effect of these politics in the translation of Public Art's value. To provide a solid basis for examining this translation I will compare *Percent-for-Art* schemes to the *Artist Placement Group (APG)* founded by artist couple John Latham and Barbara Stevini in 1966, who I will demonstrate to be the founding influence of *Percent-for-Art* schemes. The differences in the language of these two initiatives will provide a platform to examine the discrepancy between the public realm's intentions with art and artists' intentions in the public realm. I will claim that a change in this language will mean a change in the climate of Public Art.

There are claims of political conspiracy surrounding the restrictions placed on public artists, an idea which is highlighted in the practices of the Richard Serra and *APG*, two practices regarded as key contributors to the public/art debate. Both have had public support retrospectively removed from artworks, to the result of high controversy: Serra's seminal *Tilted Arc* was removed from New York City Federal Plaza in 1989 and the Arts Council withdrew funding from *APG* in 1971, both of which I will expand upon. Subscribing to conspiratorial claims lends the idea that attempting to establish artistic autonomy in the public realm is futile. This dissertation intends to establish a solid reasoning to the resistance to Serra and *APG*'s work in order to create a feasible route of progression in realizing artistic autonomy in the public realm.

Lost in Translation: Percent-for-Art

It is useful to look at the relationship between the public and art in two ways. Firstly, from a traditional perspective, Public Art can be defined as “sculptures and installation sited in public places” (Kwon 2002: 105). In this format art is usually commemorative and/or decorative. Here, Public Art helps develop a sense of civic character by honouring citizens and creating a unique and visually dynamic environment, described by the term ‘place-making’ (Lynch 1960)ⁱⁱ. This term has been adopted by the makers of Public Art policy to justify Public Art. Here we see the artist as someone who enriches the urban environment, celebrating existing culture or history. Someone who can celebrate the products of the community, or be in themselves a product of the community, creating visual tributes or gifts. In this sense, art is seen as a skilled service.

Secondly, art is seen as an educative and culture bestowing institution. Akin to learning to appreciate poetry or classical music, it is thought that an understanding of Fine Art can enhance people’s lives. There is a belief that knowledge of art enriches culture, fuelling the attempt to make high art accessible. The Government’s aim to get the public into galleries is reflected in Goal 4 of the agreement between the Arts Council and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport: “More consumption of the Arts by More of the People”, quantified by the percentage of adults attending arts events, including art galleries and exhibitions (Smith 1999 in Wallinger and Warnock 2002: 14). In this sense, art is seen as education.

Neither of these public/art relationships necessarily allow the artist to use the public realm for the sake of their own practice. The former relationship aims to bring artistic skill to public service, and the latter brings the educative value of art to public service. In this sense, the artist cannot work autonomouslyⁱⁱⁱ in the public realm without obligation to the public. This sounds reasonable in its own logic, but alongside claims that high art has an educative value to the public – a point which provides leverage for the justification of art in public space – the question is raised: what is the route for autonomous art to be placed in the public realm? The slippage between these two public/art relationships suggests a third form of Public Art. A hybrid of these relationships, wherein there is a conceptual reliance on the public realm, but the work is not for the explicit benefit of the public.

This suggested third form can be exemplified by sculptor Richard Serra’s seminal *Tilted Arc*, 1981, New York City Federal Plaza (Fig 1), an imposing 120 foot long by 12 foot high curving wall of steel. It is pivotal in the public/art discourse.^{iv} It demonstrates high art meeting with the public realm in a problematic manner; the public/art relationships outlined collide to unveil a conflict in their intentions.

Serra is interested in how artworks operate differently in a non-art situation. His position is in reaction to what fellow artist Robert Smithson described as Modernism’s “forgetfulness of context and its requirement to imaginatively transcend all bodily and social constraint” (Wood 1993). He attempts to establish that artists can work autonomously in the public realm. His site-specific works depend on their public context whilst remaining autonomous from the direct demands of the public realm; a relational autonomy, not the ultra-autonomy of minimalism. Disinterested in public benefit, he infamously proclaimed “Art is not democratic. It is not for the people.”^v His work remains solely the product of his own artistic concerns, which incidentally include the politics of Public Art. The public realm becomes the subject matter and medium. The work is activated by public space,

but the dialogue surrounding it remains firmly within the domain of the art institution. This can be seen as a new autonomy.

Serra's interests included altering people's awareness of their surroundings. With *Tilted Arc* he did so provocatively; it obstructed use of the plaza, forcing workers in the surrounding offices to divert from their usual thoroughfare. Serra's enormous and apparently precarious work was disorientating and disabling, and did not subscribe to traditional notions of public sculpture; it was big and rusty, viewed by many as an eyesore.

In ways he relates to modernist notions of autonomy. He clearly feels art should not conform to conventions of practice and taste or be easy to understand: a position highlighted through *Tilted Arc's* aesthetic, public siting and the outrage caused amongst the public. In *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, Grant Kester speaks of Viktor Shklovsky and Bertolt Brecht's interrelated theories on the accessibility of art. Kester explains: "In Shklovsky's writing we encounter the characteristic to make art 'difficult': to thicken and complicate its formal appearance in order to focus the viewer on the materiality of language itself." He goes on to relate how Shklovsky believes that in this manner we can aid our recognition of "the world in its full complexity", currently held back by our dependence on "existing linguistic conventions" that encourage a "habitual' form of perception". This approach is mirrored in Brecht's bold statement: "Alienation is necessary to all understanding" (Kester 2004: 82-85). Serra's work appropriates modernist views into the public realm - ground-breaking given that these views focused on a gallery-based practice and discounted public funding and publicly sited work as disruptive to art's autonomy.

Despite this work's success in addressing Serra's concerns, and in contributing to an art institutional discourse, the aggravational nature of *Tilted Arc* led to threats of its removal. In wake of this, Serra describes a "tremendous outpouring from the art world, and a tremendous solidarity from the art world" (The Late Show 2002) who clearly recognized its value. But a public trial - wherein interested government agencies, corporations and individual office workers spoke out against the work - condemned it to removal on 15th March 1989^{vi}.

Serra's work has an interesting dialogue with the work of the *Artist Placement Group (APG)*^{vii} founded in 1966 by artist couple Babara Stevini and John Latham. *APG* were operating in the 60's and 70's - as was Serra - and were in many ways reacting to similar issues as Serra; their respective practices can be regarded as strains of the same school of thought. Both fought to establish a new balance in the public/art relationship, making aggressive steps to re-establish the role of the artist in society. Where Serra provided an 'aesthetic resistance' (Wood 1993) to art as a public service, *APG* were trying to develop a structure within which artists could directly or indirectly engage with society whilst maintaining a form of artistic autonomy. An autonomy whereby the artist was at the service of the public realm, but a mutual respect and benefit was at play.

A cross between an artist-in-residence scheme and a work placement, artists were put in a range of industrial, educational and governmental working environments. Work was produced to an "open brief" and on an entirely site-specific basis, comprising of actions the artist saw fit for that particular environment. Artists spent at least one month on site drawing together a proposal for the company, who would then negotiate a contract. Artists who undertook placements included Ian Breakwell, Stuart Brisley, Hugh Davies, George Levantis, Andrew Dipper and David Toop. (Eleey 2007)

These artists were versatile, with a range of skills to apply to given situations. Work included strategic policy suggestions, expanding workers' skills, writing papers and reports, and producing their own artworks - often within the same placement. The artists approached these industries with a relative ignorance of its conventions, and the artist's ability to therein transcend the conventions of that industry made them invaluable. This can clearly be seen as an appropriation and/or direct application of modernist views on autonomy. APG's version of autonomy was that the artists were, "bound by invitation rather than instructions from authority within the organizations, department, [or] company" (APG in Eleey 2007). However - as it did for Serra - this autonomy became troublesome.

On his placement with Ocean Trading and Transport Ltd, 1974, George Levantis, "had a sculpture tossed overboard because it didn't fit in with what the hosts expected of him; namely to relieve boredom among the crew by teaching them watercolour painting." Writer Peter Eleey describes how Levantis found the open brief inspirational - the source of his ideas - but, "his shipmates [...] sometimes struggled to understand the artist's resistance to a service relationship." (Eleey 2007) The host paid the artist the equivalent wage to a professional within that industry, and with that payment came a service-based expectation.

In attempting to break the serve/receive relationship and establish a new autonomy (both of which are institutional directives, although they can be said to benefit to the public via autonomous art's educative value), it would perhaps be easier if the placements were publicly funded. Expectation of a service would be decreased and the idea of a mutual benefit should be highlighted. But there are complexities in publicly funding such work. This can be exemplified by APG and Serra's claimed misuse of public resources. In 1971 the Arts Council revoked APG's funding. The Arts Council stated that the group were 'more concerned with social engineering than with straight art' (Eleey 2007). If we return to the removal of Serra's *Tilted Arc* in 1989, the trial was run on the basis that the US Government had paid good money for the piece, and as an official put it, "We strongly believe that the public has a right to tell us how they feel about the way in which their Government spends their money." (The Late Show 2002)

Both the work of Serra and APG, directly or indirectly, were unwitting contributors to the argument that art in the public realm needed to be more accountable, ironically undermining their intentions. 'Accountability' effectively means that the exact effect of artworks needs to be predicted before they are commissioned, and thus before they are made. This demonstrates an ignorance - and evidently a fear - of the fluidity and unpredictability of artistic practice, something that most artists count as a valuable and core element of their work. Number 22 of artist and writer Sol Lewitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* states: "The artist cannot imagine his art, and cannot perceive it until it is complete." (Lewitt, 1969 in Osborne, 2002: 222) The demand for accountability denies room for manoeuvre, reducing the artist's autonomy in the public realm.

Artist and writer John Newling^{viii} describes monuments and memorials as in-keeping with a contract between the community and the Council. They are "familiar in form, material and meaning", and they "exist within agreed functions". He suggests that despite the fact they "inhabit agendas of civic power", their familiarity allows this to go overseen (Newling 2005). Both the examples of Levantis and Serra demonstrate a lack of familiarity that induces a reaction of outrage. In both situations an expectation of what the artist would bring to a situation was superseded by the unexpected.

Cameron Cartiere, program leader of MA Arts Management at Birkbeck, University of London, and Sophie Hope, artist, describe the public funding process as 'pre-emptive' (Cartiere and Hope 2007). Cartiere expresses how artists feel that in order to receive funding for public work, they need to demonstrate "how the work would inspire a community, reduce crime, respond to the environment, contribute to urban renewal and/or support rural sustainability, provide educational and cultural opportunities, and inspire debate without being confrontational." (Cartiere 2007) Here we see artists being asked to predict the exact outcomes of their work, as well as the public/art relationship slipping back into the serve/receive relationship that Serra and APG were trying to fight.

If we look to Croydon Council, its own instruction to developers on the inclusion of Public Art in new developments is inconclusive when it comes to the balance between artistic freedom and the public consultation process: "To create a sense of ownership and pride, Public Artworks should engage with the local community but avoid weak/unimaginative work resulting from compromise. Consultation is an integral part of an art commission as well as the planning process." (Croydon 2005: 4). These two sentences seem tenuously linked, and intentionally vague.

The retrospective removal of public funding to APG and Serra demonstrates governmental resistance to artists working autonomously in the public realm. Despite claims that this resistance is a political conspiracy^{ix}, it is my claim that it has much to do with a language barrier between art and the Government – a language barrier that can be bridged. Philosopher Mary Warnock describes the 3 questions asked by the Government in commissioning the Arts as:

- How much?
- To whom?
- With what possible show of justice? (Warnock in Wallinger and Warnock 2002: 10)

The questions being asked by the authorities, and therein the issues found with APG and Serra, are restrictive and not reflective of the value of such work, and thus are impossible to answer in favor of the art in question. I believe this to be the reason for the retrospective removal of support from APG and Serra. It is my claim that the "fear" felt is only an issue because the challenge of art has not been factored in as a benefit of Public Art and integral to artistic practice. I will move on to examine in more detail this language barrier to demonstrate why the authorities are poorly positioned to oversee the facilitation of Public Art.

Despite having their funding revoked, APG went on to impress the Civil Service who, in 1972, issued an official memorandum recommending the integration of artists into public planning. It is my claim that this recommendation is the key moment when the Government decided to directly integrate artists into its infrastructure and policies, and therein APG emerged as the founder of the *Percent-for-Art* schemes we know today. I will now back up this claim, moving on to use the comparison between the ethos of APG and current *Percent-for-Art* policy to chart and analyze the aforementioned language barrier.

Most local planning authorities have a *Percent-for-Art* scheme stipulating that 1% of the total budget of new developments goes to incorporating Public Art into the development. Often non-statutory, these schemes vary in their success to actually deliver Public Art^x. *Percent-for-Art* applies to both public and privately owned public space, and constitutes the main standardised output of Public Art. The language they use demonstrates APG's influence, suggesting *Percent-for-Art* is the integration of art into public planning recommended by the Civil Service.

To illustrate this, I will be using Croydon Council's *Percent-for-Art* scheme. Croydon make for an interesting example in many ways. It is London's largest borough in population - and the largest town in Western Europe - and therein has a considerably large public spending budget. They are a somewhat maverick Council, with a history of firsts. In 2000 they reinstated their tram system - the first new tram system in London. Home to Britain's first commercial Airport in 1920, they were also the first place in the world to be served by both train and canal. More recently they became the first borough to insist that all new developments offset 10% of their carbon emissions with renewable energy, a policy later taken up nationally^{xi}. They are a front-runner in 'Urban Lighting' in accordance with the 'Skyline Millennium Scheme' (Croydon 2005: p3). At one point Croydon had the biggest cinema in Europe and was an early home to the British film industry. Until recently it had the biggest second-hand record shop in the world. Despite all of this, Croydon does not have a formally established cultural industry and struggles with its cultural identity. In their own words, "There are comparatively few examples of Public Art within Croydon, particularly when account is taken of the borough's size" (Croydon 2005: 1). This suggests that Croydon's Public Art agenda should be ambitious.

Every developer is issued relevant *Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)* documents, including a *Public Art Supplementary Planning Guidance* document. This SPG supplements a policy in Croydon's core statutory plan, The Croydon Plan, which requires developers to include Public Art in their developments. It is this policy and the SPG document that facilitates the fulfilling of *Percent-for-Art* schemes. The SPG should include all the information a developer needs to meet their *Percent-for-Art* quota. In itself it demonstrates the Council's ethos in fulfilling its Public Art policy.

Croydon Council's *Public Art Supplementary Planning Guidance* demonstrates APG as the origins of *Percent-for-Art* schemes by reflecting certain language associated with APG. This includes:

- Explaining that "works of art engage people in interpreting and understanding their environment." This relates very strongly to the work of Garth Evans who on placement in a steel works showed workers how to use the material they dealt with every day in a sculptural way, opening their eyes to the potential of the material and instigating a new way for them to engage with their environment.
- Stating that "the Council's preference is for Public Art that is fully integrated into development proposals". This suggests that the process of designing the development should go hand-in-hand with the integration of art, reflecting how APG's artists fully integrated themselves into their placement environment.
- Suggesting that one way of commissioning artwork is to "offer a residency during the development/construction period". In other words, an artist placement.
- Advising that "Public Art [...] should be based on relevant themes relating to the use and form of the building, local activity and local heritage", nodding to the site-specificity championed by APG.

- Explaining the benefits of early negotiation: “It is important Public Art is discussed between the developer and the Council at the earliest possible opportunity to be worthwhile for all those involved. The earlier artists are involved, the more effectively they can contribute to a development. Public Art should be raised in pre-application discussions so an art consultant or artist can be commissioned while the development is being designed and the Public Artwork forms an integral part of the design.” *APG* would advocate the integration of an artist in the first instance.

This document also demonstrates the huge discrepancy between the basis on which the Civil Service’s recommendation was made and how this recommendation is now implemented. This is by:

- Subtitled the document: *Advice, design considerations and criteria on how and where to locate art features*. Immediately this suggests that the work would be a physical piece, ‘located’ somewhere on a development. The term ‘features’ points towards object-based practice, a notion that *APG* sought to diminish. *APG* firmly intended for the artist to contribute in a non-object-based manner – for the artist to assume a new role in society - and to contribute in an object-based manner only where appropriate.
- Quoting exclusively from Urban Design literature, Governmental policies and Croydon’s own policies. This includes: *By Design – urban design in the planning system: towards a better practice, 2000*; *Central Croydon Vision 2020*; *Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)*; *Croydon Draft Public Art Strategy, 2004*; *The Croydon Plan, 2003*; *The Government*; *The London Plan, 2004*; and *The Urban Design Compendium, 2000*. Nowhere in the SPG is a quote from an art institutional source.
- Following “works of art engage people in interpreting and understanding their environment” with “and contribute to an attractive and stimulating streetscene”, deposing an accurately open and intelligent sentence. *APG* clearly did not intend to contribute to attractive streetscenes.
- Using the following quote from the *Croydon Plan, 2003*: “Public Art is the integration of artists’ ideas and works into the built and natural environment and can incorporate sculpture, mosaics, tapestries, etched and stained glass, wall reliefs, railings and gates designed and made by artists.” It is clear that many of these features are not art. It is suggested that the *Percent-for-Art* scheme can be satisfied via a vast range of non-art sources.
- Quoting the Government and *Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)*’s definition of Public Art: “permanent or temporary physical works of art of art visible to the general public, whether part of the building or free standing; can include sculpture, lighting effects, street furniture, paving, railings and signs”. As in the previous point, this definition only sanctions physical artworks, rebuffing the suggestion of a residency or any other non-physical work. Again a vast range of non-art outlets are suggested. These suggestions can be seen as a quick-fix approach to integrating art into the public realm. According to art theorist Grant H. Kester, Latham’s passion with *APG* was based on “the contention that industry and government tend to

be dominated by short-term problem solving responses and that conventional planners and administrators find it difficult to envision the long-term implications of their actions.” (Kester 2004: 62) According to Latham, the durational thinking needed to balance this short-term approach is precisely what an artist can offer. It is paradoxical that this quick-fix approach is the evolution of a scheme with such long-termist roots.

- Stating: “There are numerous ways of interpreting Public Art but it should be:
 - Created by, or with the assistance of, professional artists and craft workers
 - Visible to the public
 - Sited within the public realm (such as a street or park) or incorporated into the design of a building or space.”

This demonstrates a clumsy priority for physical, outdoor works that are either art or non-art. The inclusion of craft is a very broad and non-professional use of the term ‘art’. *APG* were concerned with repositioning the professional artist in society. The *SPG* is effectively saying that *Percent-for-Art* initiatives do not need to be fulfilled by artists. The inclusion of craft further lends the policy towards physical works.
- Suggesting that Public Art can: be a useful ‘marketing tool’; ‘add prestige’; be an ‘inexpensive way of adding value’; and help to ‘lever in grant aid or further investment’. Although *APG* suggested that a placement can improve the working environment and working practice they did not overtly suggest commercial gain.
- Allowing “in circumstances where sufficient reasoning has been provided, or where the amount of money allocated within a development budget will not be adequate for a finished artwork [...] [the developer may] [...] make a financial contribution towards public art as part of an area-based regeneration strategy such as Vision 2020 (Central Croydon) and Town/District Centres, or contribute to other Council-led arts initiatives in line with the Croydon Plan and Public Art Strategy.” *APG* intended for artists to be integrated into the work environment - allowing a donation to be given outside of the development entirely misses the point.

From the language and the politics surrounding this document, we can analyze how such a transformation has happened.

Simplifying developers’ obligations by allowing them to financially contribute to Public Art outside of the development indicates the pressure to ensure uptake of the *Percent-for-Art* scheme; but it also suggests the Council do not have the specialized knowledge necessary to express the idea of an artist placement. An addition to the policy suggests that large developments should contribute 1% of the total build cost or £40K, whichever is highest. The £40k is preferred by Croydon Council: it has been seen that developers hide certain building costs in the percent-based scheme in order to lessen their contribution to Public Art. This combined with the suggestion that money can be contributed outside of the development has led to developers attempting to give Croydon Council £40K towards Public Art as long as it does not take place within the development, regarding the *Percent-for-Art* scheme as ‘art tax’.^{xii}

The inclusion of items such as gates and railings suggests that fulfilling the *Percent-for-Art* quota requires a catalogue, not an artist. The non-statutory nature of the scheme lends itself to a simplification and broadening of objectives to ensure uptake. Despite encouraging developers to bring artists on board early, the *Percent-for-Art* issue is still usually addressed late in the development process. This can be attributed to the fact that it appears easy to 'add-on' art.

If we look back to the original recommendation made by the civil service, we can plot a map of the linguistic journey of *Percent-for-Art* schemes. 'Artists being integrated into public planning' sounds an accurate translation of APG's intentions. Public planning, however, can be translated as urban planning, the planning of the built environment. *Percent-for-Art* schemes recommend that art is incorporated into every new development. "Developments" mean every built aspect of a town or city and include parks, offices, plazas, housing and shopping centres. The recommendation that *artists* should be integrated into *public planning* has been translated into *Public Art* being integrated into *new developments*. This was not APG's intention.

Any development requires consent from the Local Planning Authority. Thus, in a linguistic snowball, the implementation of *Percent-for-Art* schemes is firmly the remit of Local Authority Urban Planning Departments. Here we see architectural and town-planning traditions encroach on *Percent-for-Art* schemes. The Planning Department translates the Public Art Policy into the SPG that developers subscribe to. The effectiveness of this implementation relies on the understanding of Public Art held by a team of Urban Designers, Architects and Town-Planners. We see Croydon contextualizing its policy by quoting Urban Design manuals, the Croydon Plan and the London Plan. All of these documents are at least one step removed from the art institution, and re-processed again in the SPG for the sake of developers.

The term 'art features', the persistence of the problematic term 'place-making', and the insistence that Public Art should have a physical presence all demonstrate an architectural tradition. Place-making, non-art features can develop the individuality of a town or city, comparable to some forms of Public Art. But the sustained reliance on the term 'placing-making' to justify and persuade uptake of Public Art provides the tenuous link to the 'place-making' value of decorative non-art features and craft. In a tokenistic gesture these are thus allowed to pass as Public Art.

There is talk in Croydon Council of re-naming the Planning Department's Urban Design Team the 'Place-Making Team', revealing that this concept is central to their role. With this in mind, the SPG reads like the Urban Design Team's general statement of intent rather than how they intend to fulfill their role in the facilitation of art into the public realm.

Although Croydon's SPG suggests an artist could be placed on a residency with the developer, it does not suggest how or with what intention. In the document, the suggestion of a residency does not occur until after many physical options and potential locations for the positioning of such works have been listed. And the wording of the residency option is ambiguous: "Option 1: To employ an artist or craftsperson as a consultant to the development team. a) To work with an architect on the design of the building and/or b) To work with a landscape architect on the design and masterplanning of the site and external spaces." This would suggest that the Planning Department's Urban Design Team do not have the specialized knowledge necessary for the implementation of such schemes.

Conclusion

'Art and architecture' has always been a troubled marriage. At points inextricable from one another, art and architecture are often grouped together both formally and informally. In the instance of *Percent-for-Art* schemes, we see one responsible for the other, architects responsible for artists. The architect subscribes to a code of social responsibility and professional conduct (ARB 1997 and RIBA 2005) that is not transferable to the artist who wishes to make work about such subscriptions, and this example alone demonstrates the situation of *Percent-for-Art* schemes under urban planning as an inherently restricted one for artists. This statement from John Newling goes some way to illustrate this predicament: "Art can be an architecture that forms itself between agreed functions" (Newling 2005: 108).

Percent-for-Art initiatives have lost their focus – namely art - because their meaning has been interpreted in the language of architecture and town planning. The broad and rich potential of Public Art has been lost through this language. Croydon Planning Department's Urban Design Team have used their specialized knowledge to make the implementation of object-based work as simple as possible because their vested interest lies in Public Art's capacity for 'place-making'. Of course, the team also has a duty to deliver the policies of the elected administration which represents and responds to the desires of the local community. This community who often express a desire for 'visual interest', mosaics, craft, 'statues', and fountains, but who, unfortunately, are not necessarily literate in art theory or fine art practice.

The standardisation of Public Art funding via *Percent-for-Art* schemes is a good win that is difficult to let go of. But this standardisation has been made in the language of the public realm, leaving the artworks produced therein subject to this realm's linguistic, economical and political conventions. The artwork produced within these schemes can be seen to be rendered useless in any other sense than becoming an affirmation of this institution. It thereby surrenders its autonomy.

This relationship silences the artist not because of political conspiracy, but through an attempt to marry two realms where the language of one is more entrenched and cannot recognise the slight but integral differences in the intentions of the other party. This analogy transfers more broadly to the relationship between art and the public realm. The public realm has power of veto at all stages in Public Art's implementation, even - as in the case of APG and Serra - having the power to retrospectively remove support. The questions Mary Warnock suggests the Government ask in the commissioning of the Arts (How much? To whom? With what possible show of justice?) do not inquire about the art form itself. They solely confront the cost and justification. A versatile and dynamic language needs to be developed that is reflective of this genre of art; a language that demonstrates Public Art's value in its own terms, and can express this to the Government. This will allow the resistance of bad translation and protect artistic autonomy. It will allow artworks not to be judged and restricted by how in-keeping they are with the Government's initiatives, but by a broad range of criteria reflective of the broad range of public practice, including its value to the art institution.

In writing this dissertation I thought I would conclude by suggesting changes to *Percent-for-Art* policies to improve how they instigate art: for *Percent-for-Art* schemes to reflect the broad range of public, social and community art practice; for a policy that protects not restricts artistic autonomy; for a policy that acts as a portal

for art, not an attempt to explain and justify art. But until the language around Public Art has developed to a level where it can battle the language of the public realm, compromises will always necessarily fall in favor of the public realm. So the real problem becomes that Public Art does not yet have the language to do this.

This language will come about in tandem with the development of Public Art's infrastructure. Currently this infrastructure is disparate. The demography of people and organisations thinking about art in the public realm is many but far between: as Jeremy Hunt, editor of *Art and Architecture* journal, notes, "there has been a phenomenal growth in Public Art [...] that's all the more remarkable given that there is no central coordination of management or information at a national level, and individual organizations tend to believe that their efforts are unique." (Hunt 2007: 18) Those in the art institution interested in the politics of art in the public realm, and those working for the public realm interested in the benefits of art do not seem to be in communication. The alienation of local authorities from the debate - which can be clearly seen in my analysis of Croydon's *Percent-for-Art* scheme, wherein there is no reference to art writing - is just an example of how disjointed this debate currently is. At *Art and Architecture Journal's* Annual National Public Art conference 2007, there were next to no urban planners, no developers and few Civil Servants. Those left to discuss were simply 'preaching to the converted'. The lack of communication between those involved in Public Art makes the development of this infrastructure very difficult.

In *Art Monthly* February 2007 we see a mocking of the idea that Public Art needs its own building, an idea that grew out of *Art and Architecture Journal's* 2nd Annual National Public Art conference^{xiii} (Usherwood 2007: 37). An organization that could accredit agencies and individuals would go a long way in ensuring best practice. The displacement of the Government's dedication to art would perhaps not have occurred if there were a coherent 'Public Art' body for the Government to consult. A 'building' would clearly speak in terms that LA's would understand, but there is an infrastructure already starting to emerge that will doubtless take on its own physical presence as necessary.

There are many ways in which this infrastructure can be seen to be developing, both informally and at junctures formally. Here are a few of the many independent initiatives recognizing the need to bridge the gaps highlighted in this dissertation:

- *A Manifesto of Possibilities: Commissioning Public Art in the Urban Environment* (Fig 2), written collaboratively by artists, keeps the process of Public Art commissioning fluid. It appropriates some of the language of governmental policies and uses a universal format. It manages to formalize the informal nature of artistic practice, something that *Percent-for-Art* policies should be doing. The three questions *APG* asked of its artists' commissions were: Where is the art? Where is the social value delivered? Who is assuming the risk? (*APG* in Eleey 2000) *APG's* questions ensure art and social benefit are at play, as well as addressing the now notorious issue of risk. *A Manifesto of Possibilities* takes this a step further, with more detail and more clarity, breaking down the commissioning and evaluation process, the selection of the artist and the art itself, as well as looking at social value. It further extends an arm both to art and to the public realm.
- This dissertation creates an artificial conversation between parties involved in the production and instigation of Public Art. The first-hand research I have undertaken has instigated a sharing of

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knowledge surrounding the issue of Public Art via interviews, emails, matchmaking and seminars (attended and hosted). It is my intention that this dissertation will be circulated amongst those involved in its research, and further. In particular I hope that the historical context given to *Percent-for-Art* schemes will be of interest and use.

- The aforementioned AAJ national conferences and seminar series which move around Britain and intend to improve the 'interface of art with urban culture'. The programme links art with other professional disciplines, reflecting the need to liken and differentiate art from other practices. The series aims to 'make an impact into long term governmental and professional thinking'^{xiv}. Ensuring that representatives of all bodies involved in Public Art implementation attend these events is a key issue that needs to be addressed.
- The interdisciplinary seminar for socially-engaged practitioners that I hosted in 2006 provided a place for selected public artists, social artists, community artists, architects, designers, think-tanks, activists and Public Art commissioners to make connections between their practices^{xv}. Sharing concerns regarding creative social practice and exploring the ways in which these problems are approached helps develop a methodology that protects the intention of the practitioner and build a new, shared language to discuss these practices. The informal encouragement of cross-disciplinary practice and debate helps instigate demand for the integration of creative art into architecture that actually comes from artists and architects.
- *Art for All* (Wallinger and Warnock 2002), a compendium of thought on the public/art relationship, brings together writings on this subject by artists, governmental agencies, curators, art teachers and art critics. Placing these texts side by side acts as a conversation between people who may not be in direct conversation.
- Existence of such magazines as *Art and Architecture Journal* and *Public Art Review* provide national and international context for Public Art.
- Increasing numbers of courses on Public Art commissioning at credible universities sees Public Art recognized as a professional sector in its own right. One key issue in the public/art debate is the non-professional use of the terms 'artist' and 'Public Art'. With these courses will come demands for Public Art professionals to be included as standard in the development of Public Art policies and schemes.
- The Arts Council's decision to fund the development of an agency to act as a central point of information and advice on art in the Public Realm. A two-year pilot service, based in London, will be available to artists, commissioning agencies, architects and planners to improve the quality of Public Art produced in the Capital.

The poor implementation of Public Art has generated the need for debate and in this way serves to help generate a new language. Until, however, Public Art has the aforementioned infrastructure and language it seems that schemes such as *Percent-for-Art* are doomed to be largely inadequate at implementing art into the

public realm. I suggest that these schemes can be seen more as an exercise in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), ensuring developers are contributing to the communities in which they are working. The real problem appears to be a lack of CSR in development companies, who have an obligation to consider the effect they have on the public realm, including - but not exclusive to - educating themselves on the social benefits of Public Art. *Percent-for-Art* schemes indicate a demand for developers to take responsibility in the public realm, as does the Merton rule and any other scheme implemented at the planning stage, and I suggest that this problem has been - inadvertently and ineffectively - addressed by a *Percent-for-Art* policy.

It seems that the 'art' in *Percent-for-Art* is a bit of a red herring. The 'art' in Croydon's *Percent-for-Art* scheme generates a language that neither addresses the most effective application of Public Art or effective regeneration. I would argue that all of the participants present at the seminar^{xvi} I hosted in 2006 create the type of work demanded by *Percent-for-Art* schemes. Work that creatively engages the public to produce objects and initiatives that are empowering, beautiful and inspiring. I find myself seeing the focus on art as these schemes' sole problematic. It prevents the commissioning of socially-engaged practitioners from non-art backgrounds who specialize in producing work that subscribes to what I would suggest are the real intentions of *Percent-for-Art* schemes. It seems clear that there is a need to call a spade a spade and fully open up these schemes to all professional creative practice that aims to make sustainable social change. Commissioning these practitioners would raise the bar and highlight the weakness of the 'art features' currently being allowed to slip through such schemes.

Since I am not necessarily suggesting the redevelopment of *Percent-for-Art* schemes to faithfully represent APG's ethos, I can explain the comparison between APG and current policy as doing three key things:

Firstly, it highlights how Council politics can mutate policies through a series of apparently logical decisions that serve to streamline policies and maximise outputs, without referring back to the original intentions of the policy. I hope that this dissertation will provide a useful platform for policy-makers to critique their own working practise, and develop the means to ensure that policies stay true to their intentions.

Secondly, the comparison fuels a demand for change in the implementation of Public Art via LA's. It is clear that they are not in the best position to directly facilitate Public Art. The narrowness of view in *Percent-for-Art* schemes when compared to APG demands that LA's dedication to the public/art relationship manifests itself in a different way. A recognition of and contribution to the debate surrounding Public Art would be a good starting point.

Thirdly, it identifies and gives leverage to questions that need to be asked in the broader public/art debate. Through critiquing policy-making process, issues surrounding how the public realm views and implements Public Art are clearly highlighted.

Repeatedly throughout this dissertation we see elements of modernist autonomy directly applied to the public realm. We can return to Shklovsky's writings where he notes the role of art to help us see "the world in its full complexity", and our inability to do so through our dependence on existing linguistic conventions that encourage habitual forms of perception. Art is not able to exist in an autonomous form when the Government oversees its facilitation; it is not able to transcend social, economic and political conventions; not able to challenge or offer an

alternative to these conventions. In the hands of the public realm, these conventions can be seen to have – akin to the linguistic journey of *Percent-for-Art* schemes - reduced art to a form that can be hijacked by other parties. Art has not retained a unique area of competence, as per modernist notions of autonomy. But in the development of an infrastructure for public art, there is the opportunity for art to substantially assert itself against these conventions in a long-term manner. We can see Public Art embarking on a direct application of modernist autonomy, fighting linguistic conventions word for word. There are many manifestations of the appropriation of the idea of autonomy into the public realm, with artistic, public or mutual value. These manifestations are exciting and challenging to both art and the public realm. It is my belief that the answer to the problematics of merging these realms is not the modernist opinion that they should be kept separate. There are many answers, answers that are much more complex and difficult to achieve, with questions that are only beginning to be unraveled.

To close, I offer this quote from John Newling:

“Code violation is a phrase used by referees at tennis matches. It is also a phrase applicable to art on the street. The players agree to a code. The artist may well transgress the code in order to make it more visible. Context may well be tacitly agreed when considering the function of a given place or situation. However, such tacit agreements tend to deny the need to move the code on or expose the code for what it is. Both are functions of art on the street.” (Newling 2005: 116)

The retrospective removal of public funding in the case of Serra and *APG* made the code more visible, and in this sense these instances can be seen to be the most successful of their works.

ⁱ The Show and Tell: Towards a Shared Language. Hosted by myself on 2nd November 2006 covered the following areas:

- Background
- Intention/Affect
- Relationship with the Gallery Space
- Funding
- Collaboration
- Relationship with theory
- Documentation.

Practitioners attending:

- Cook, Mary Rose, Us-Creates, designers for social change, www.us-creates.com
- Davies, Lewis, Knee High, theatre group devising community-specific projects, www.kneehigh.co.uk
- Eastop, Ben, Arts Projects, freelance Public Art project management
- Gormley, Ivo, ThinkPublic, think-tank for NHS Service provision, www.thinkpublic.com
- Hull, Hannah, Hannah's Cafe, social artist, www.hannahscafe.co.uk
- Lacovara, Vincent, AOC, architecture practice, www.theaoc.co.uk
- Priestley, Robin, Space Hijackers, creative protest group ('Anarchitects'), www.spacehijackers.org
- Smith, Theresa, Mooch Design, community arts, www.moochdesign.com

ⁱⁱ A term discussed in works such as *The Image of the City* by renowned city planner Kevin Lynch.

ⁱⁱⁱ For further reading on notions of autonomy relevant to this dissertation:

- Adorno, Theodor. *Letter to Benjamin*. 1936. From: Harrison, Charles and Wood, Paul (Eds). *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An anthology of changing ideas* (Great Britain: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) pp520-523
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Author as Producer*, from a lecture delivered in 1934 to the Institute for the Study of Fascism. From: Harrison, Charles and Wood, Paul (Eds) *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An anthology of changing ideas*. (Great Britain: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) pp483-489
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- Serra, Richard. *From the Yale Lecture*, 1990. From: Harrison, Charles and Wood, Paul (Eds). *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An anthology of changing ideas* (Great Britain: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) pp1124-1127

^{iv} In researching the work of Richard Serra I have looked to the following sources:

- *The Late Show: Richard Serra*. London: BBC. 1992. Includes footage from The Trial of *Tilted Arc*: Video Data Bank 1985
- Modern Art: practices & debates. *Smithson & Serra: beyond modernism*. Written and presented by Paul Wood. London: BBC/Open University. 1992.
- Serra, Richard. *From the Yale Lecture*, 1990. From: Harrison, Charles and Wood, Paul (Eds). *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An anthology of changing ideas*. (Great Britain: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) pp1124-1127
- Sherrill Jordan, Lisa Parr, Robert Porter and Gwen Storey (Eds). *Public Art: Public Controversy - The Tilted Arc on Trial*. (New York: Port City Press, 1987)

^v This well-known quote is known by rote but can be found at the Culture Shock website:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/flashpoints/visualarts/tiltedarc_a.html> [accessed 02.01.08]

^{vi} Though still in tact, there is continuing controversy surrounding his work Fulcrum sited in London's Broadgate development in Liverpool Street, London. In a BBC documentary, the development itself is described as making "extensive use of modern art to embellish its corporate image", which makes it a particularly pertinent site for a work intended on some level to disrupt the traditional perception of the role of art in the public realm. (Wood 1993)

^{vii} Recently changed to 'Organisation and Imagination', or 'O+I'

In researching the *Artist Placement Group* I have looked to the following sources:

- APG/Tate Online. APG *Artist Placement Group* micro site 2005. <<http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/artistsinfocus/apg/default.htm>> [Accessed 17/12/07]
- *Art and Social Intervention: The Incidental Person. Artist Placement Group Symposium at Tate Britain* 23.03.05.
- Eleey, Peter. *Context is Half the Work*, an article on the *Artist Placement Group*. From: *Frieze*, November – December 2000 pp154-159
- Latham, John and Stevini, Barbara (APG). *Art as social Strategy in Institutions and Organisation with the Artist Placement Group (APG) London*. 1990. Published as part of APG Archive - Art and Social Intervention: The Incidental Person symposia pack. Symposia held at Tate Britain 23.03.05. Also available from. P249 Conceptual Art (Phaidon Press LTD; Hong Kong, 2002).

Stevini, Barbara. *Repositioning Art in the Decision-Making processes of Society (in government, commerce, the disciplines and professions*. Date unknown. Interrupt Website <http://www.interrupt-symposia.org/articles/read.cgi?bs_educator_1> [accessed 17/12/07]

^{viii} John Newling is an internationally renowned artist and writer, currently Professor of Installation at Nottingham Trent University.

^{ix} It is difficult to pin down whether it was Serra's direct effect upon the public or the political ideology inherent in the 'aesthetic resistance' of his sculptures that caused the real controversy. We can see how the removal of *Tilted Arc* could lend itself to a feeling of political conspiracy given Serra's open denial that art could be 'for the people'. APG made it clear that they had a social agenda, and that through working with the agencies that serve the public, "it should not be unreasonable to predict that as a result of carefully directed dissemination of the basic concepts, in 20 years some thousands of millions of people will have their lives improved, qualitatively, as compared with their condition today; many major policy decisions will have been altered and innovations introduced of a kind which will be fundamentally democratic on a wider base than is possible under the present short-term considerations of power." (APG, 1971 in Eleey, 2000) It is easy to see why this political agenda would be unnerving to those giving public money to the projects. These conspiratorial notions cannot entirely be certified and subscribing them renders the attempt to establish artistic autonomy in the public realm useless. I will continue to suggest a more solid reasoning for this resistance, and therein a possible route to facilitate autonomous Public Art.

^x It is apt here to note that my knowledge of the integration of the arts into the public realm via Local Authorities has come from the following original research:

- My professional experience as an Event Coordinator for public events
- An interview with Vincent Lacovara, Architect with AOC Architecture LTD and civil servant in the Urban Design Team at Croydon Council 15.07.07
- An interview with Zlantinka Hristova, Arts Coordinator for Croydon Council 05.12.06
- An interview with Ben Eastop, freelance Arts Coordinator 24.03.07

- Attending Art and Architecture Journal's National Art Public Conference 2007. *Art in the Public: The Culture of Possibilities*. Broadway Media Centre, Nottingham. 07 12 07.

^{xi} Confusingly called the 'Merton' rule

^{xii} Interview with Zlatinka Hristova, Public Arts Development Officer, Croydon Council. 05.12.06

^{xiii} 'The City in Transition: Art in the Public Realm and the creation of a Vibrant Civic Culture' December 17 and 18 2006. Art and Architecture Journal's 2nd Annual Public Art conference, Liverpool. As part of the Liverpool Biennial.

^{xiv} P4 of pamphlet produced for Art in the Public: The Culture of Possibilities 2007.

^{xv} See footnote I

^{xvi} See footnote I

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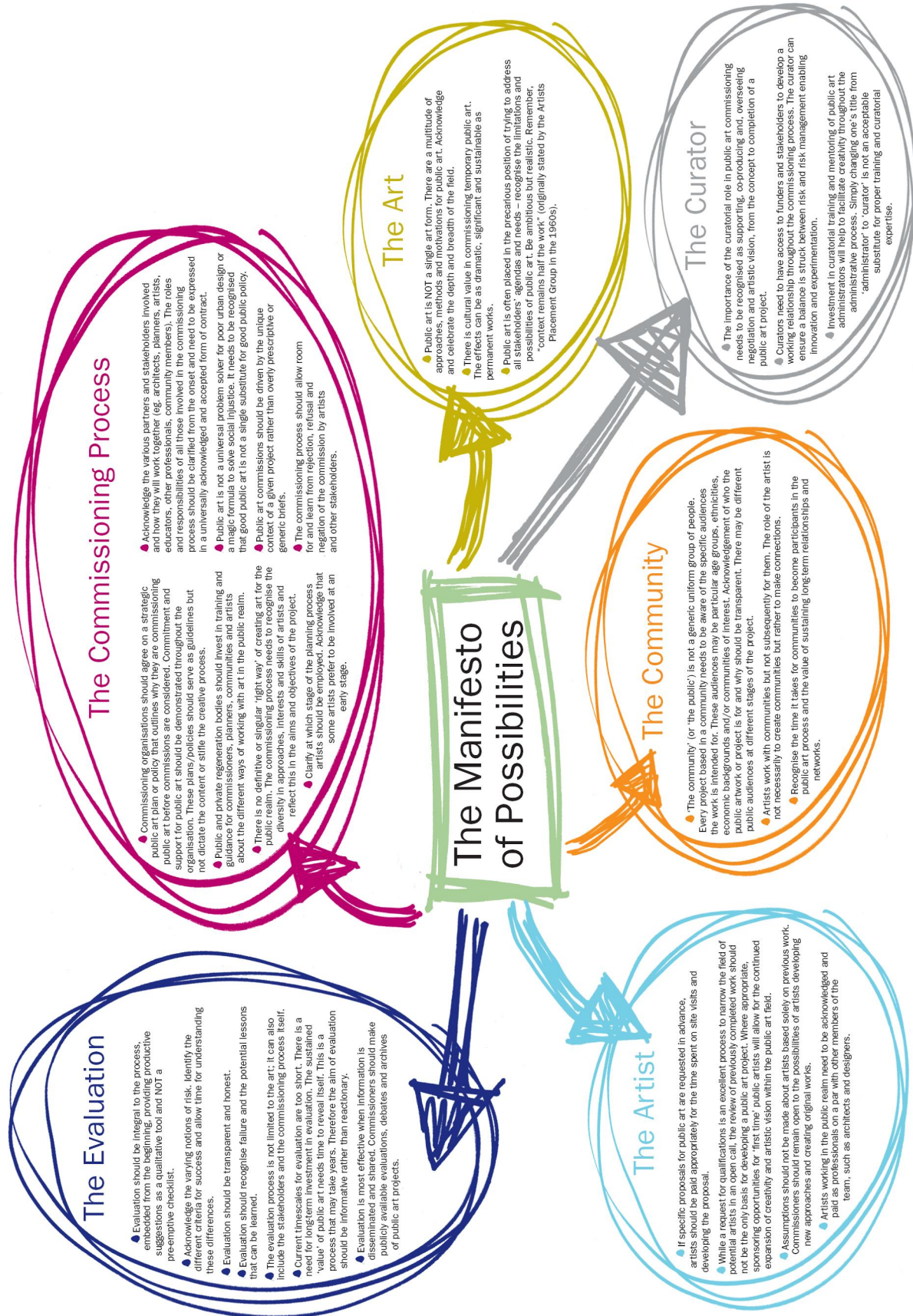
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Figure 1



***Tilted Arc.* Steel. New York City Plaza
By Richard Serra, 1981.**

Figure 2



A Manifesto of Possibilities: Commissioning Public Art in the Urban Environment.
 By Cameron Cartiere and Sophie Hope, 2007.

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