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Personal Mapping in NYC
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AiOP response

The Art of Walking & Art in Odd Places

Walking may seem as the most mundane activities of our everyday, but when you add a concept and a location, the act may purely become a work of art. From Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* to Gillian Wearing's *Homage to the woman with the bandaged face who I saw yesterday down Walworth Road*, and to *Art in Odd Places'* *La Masa* by Cesar Cornejo to our class' participation in *Signs Of Growth + Mobile Gardens*, walking functions as the fundamental aspect of the work; and it is embedded by a compelling and thought-provoking idea.

Ever since I discovered the work of Vito Acconci, Gillian wearing and other artists whose work extends to the parameters of these two, I have felt intrigued by the notion of performance and public art. How different is art when it relies solely on a street instead of having its house be a gallery or a museum? The Dadaists who went on to challenge the conventions of the art world destroyed the formal notion of seeing art. These became the roots for what performance and public art is today: democratic. However, performance art may have its limitations; for instance I viewed Shen Wei's performance at the Armory during the summer for \$10. Yet, when a performance enters the public arena art is democratized; it is strictly for anyone: a passerby with interest or no interest.

Although I mention Acconci and Wearing as artists who use performance in their work, I am not entirely sure if their pieces would be considered public. Both artists deal with concepts about the public and the private, nevertheless their pieces use other media: photography, video, and text. Their inclusion in this short writing assignment is

for referencing the way they used the street: a metaphor for the quotidian in their work. How does the street function in their artwork? For Acconci it is a symbol for him to pursue a series of following pieces that involve the creation of a discourse that distinguishes our public and private spaces. Wearing does a similar reference, yet she brings issues of identity and power relationships in the video piece I mentioned earlier.

The concepts of public and private, identity and power become a forum on the street. This is the same location that becomes inherently important in the work that was represented in this year's Art in Odd Places. The odd place: NYC's 14th St. The Art: a range from environmentally friendly to politically unfriendly.

I was especially interested in helping with this project; both performance and public art are of great interest to me. Although my personal work does not reflect any interest in the environment, it was mind-boggling to see how the artist Tattfo Tan created functional sculptures out of pure junk that generates an environmental commentary. Making these sculptural mobile gardens was personally odd; and that perhaps was the intention of the work: create odd moveable planters for Art in Odd Places. To further my comment on the stand that this work creates with environmental issues, I found this particular position of incredible importance.

This work consisted of making mobile gardens that would then be pushed by Eugene Lang College students that would walk west on 14th St. The performers used the street and the act of walking as the elements to exhibit their sculptures. What lies deeply into this simple and subtle type of work is an incredible sense of an environmental agenda. What is the meaning behind having a few young students walk with a bunch of plants that move around the street? First perhaps just pure silliness, but second to comment on the importance of finding innovative ways to conserve a planet in need for environmental change. Indeed, the latter is more coherent of an answer!

And that is what I found to be fascinating about both my viewing and participation in this piece. It showcased a relevant and an important issue of our society, and it chose the street as its stage. Of course there were problems: poor weather condition, a small group of performers, but what is important to point out is that an idea was conceived and it was performed. Few people may have come across the performance, and few may have understood its valuable meaning. But I see this piece to be more about the students than the possible viewers. It was an idea for me to help with and for me to expand the different ways in which I can formulate a concept. As an artist I was introduced to realms that I had been interested but had not fully created. Although the environment is not an issue for which I want my work to comment on, I now certainly want to incorporate the idea of bringing my work out into the street.

Friday afternoon I planned to view Cesar Cornejo's piece *La Masa*. For some reason I was unable to find the piece; I waited on 5th ave and 14th st for 10 minutes for the piece to pass by, but it never did! Perhaps I got there too early or too late. But from what I read on the AiOP website it was a piece that would have the artist reading a poem as he was carried by a few people on a coffin. When I read about this piece my memory brought me to the work of Gillian Wearing and Regina José Galindo. Galindo also used the street to perform *Quien puede borrar las huellas?* In this politically charged video piece she documents herself walking along a Guatemalan street. She comments and protests against her government as she leaves a trail of her footprints made with blood.

Through my knowledge of different artists who have used the street as the center stage of their work and my own participation in *Signs Of Growth + Mobile Gardens*, I now find walking to be an important element to try to incorporate in my own work.