

CHAPTER 6 THE PUBLIC ART PLAN

Public art in SRP will establish the park as symbolically, culturally, and even naturally significant. Moreover, public art is one of many tactics that Schuylkill River Development Council (SRDC) will deploy in improving neglected urban space and economically developing Center City, Philadelphia. Here, public art is not mandated by percent-for-art ordinances (see Chapters 3 and 4), but, rather, the civic benevolence of SRP planners. According to SRDC, public art has the potential to provide innovative learning and visual experiences to park visitors; distinguish and provide a unique identity for the park; heighten awareness of Philadelphia's natural resources and the need to sustain them; provide the opportunity for collaboration between artists, park neighbors, and members of the community to enhance quality of life in the city; and to provide incentives for economic development (SRDC 1997: 2).

The public art plan was implemented in two phases by the advisory committee, which was composed of representatives from SRDC, the Delta Group (the landscape architecture firm that has been involved with the development of the park since the late 1960s), and leaders and representatives from the Philadelphia arts community. Independent curator and neighborhood resident, Julie Courtney, oversaw the implementation of the public art plan. The role of the Delta Group was to assist in the public art selection process, assist artists with conceptual planning, assist in the development of overall theme and framework plan, and to coordinate construction (including installation of artworks, scheduling and coordination of construction and fabrication, securing permits and approvals, and complying with safety standards—all of which has yet to occur since ground has yet to be broken for

either landscape design or public art). The role of SRDC, with the guidance of Courtney, was to oversee the project, participate in outreach to cultural and educational communities, assist in the selection of artists, and to present the art plan to members of communities neighboring the park and to the public at large (SRDC 1997: 1-2). Unfortunately, there has been little attempt to either involve or inform local communities regarding the public art plan. While an exhibition was held featuring drawings of the proposed projects in May 1998 and a presentation of the plan given to members of the Center City Residents Association (CCRA), following their complaint to the Fairmount Park Commission regarding the lack of community involvement in the public art process, the neighboring community has had little or no input in the public art process.

Julie Courtney, in consultation with SRDC, developed a two-phase public art plan in order to more easily direct the public art process. Phase I planning, which included the development of interpretive and thematic schemes for public art, the establishment of a process, and guidelines for the selection of artists, the review of submission materials, and the selection of semi-finalists, utilized the input of the advisory committee, of which I was a participant. Phase II was implemented after the selection of the semi-finalists, and was undertaken without the advice of the majority of the advisory committee—a smaller team of jurors was appointed in order to make the final selections for public artists and assist in the scheduling and installation of the art with project architects. Neither I, nor most of the advisory committee was asked to participate on this jury. As I will relate later, the dissolution of the advisory board and the creation of a more “elite” finalist committee was unannounced—the advisory board was never notified that it would be dissolved and would not participate in the final phase of the selection process. Between January and September 1996, the advisory committee met a total of eight times. It was during these meetings that planning and discussion took place.

Aside from the SRDC representation on the advisory committee, which included John Randolph and Julie Courtney, the advisory committee was composed of various representatives from the Philadelphia arts community. Although the entire committee consisted of twenty-five people, I have only listed here those who regularly attended meetings: Penny Bach, director, Fairmount Park Art Association; Alex Baker, Anthropology Student, Temple University and neighborhood resident; Melissa Franklin, director, Pew Fellowships in the Arts; Susan Davis, Director, Redevelopment

Authority Fine Arts Program; Todd Gilens, artist and neighborhood resident; Ann Karlen, Director, Vox Populi Gallery, and neighborhood resident; Leah Jaynes Karp, artist and arts administrator; Marsha Moss, public art curator and consultant, and director, Art Front Partnerships; Rochelle Toner, dean, Tyler School of Art.

Planning and Formulation of Guidelines for the Selection of Public Art

In order to efficiently implement guidelines for the project and devise and carry out a methodology for selecting art for the park, Julie Courtney, project coordinator, suggested that the committee divide itself into three subcommittees: theme, selection process, and administration. During our first two meetings which took place on January 15 and February 21, 1996, the advisory board raised issues and placed them under appropriate committee headings.

Theme

- *Identify theme, vision and scope of the public art project(s) locally, regionally and internationally;
- *define potential audiences and its relationship to theme;
- *increase the advisory committee's understanding of the project through a visit to the site.

Selection Process

- *Define a selection process for public art;
- *define the role of artists;
- *identify potential locations for public art along the river.

Administration

- *Define the design and construction aspects and park access points;
- *define ownership, maintenance, and insurance issues;
- *identify required permits;
- *clarify partnership with the city.

Lively discussions ensued which established the following guidelines for the project:

- *Include artists early in the design and planning process for the park;
- *make special efforts to consider emerging and local artists for the public art project;
- *re-think the idea of public art: "break the envelope;"

*seek and select works of art that will underscore recreational opportunities, nature and history;

*make efficient use of budgeted monies by encouraging artists to use indigenous materials or those already planned for use in other parts of the park.

Members of the committee selected to participate in various sub-committees. I chose to participate in both the theme and selection process committees.

At our first meeting, January 15, 1996, the issue of public art maintenance was raised, which lead into a discussion on park maintenance in general. Thora Jacobson, Director of the Fleisher Art Memorial in South Philadelphia (who intermittently attended meetings) raised the issue of “who owns the art once it is created and who would be responsible for maintaining it” (Jacobson 1996). This is still unresolved to this day, as a maintenance plan for the future park and the administration of its public art has yet to be fully articulated. As mentioned in Chapter 5, John Randolph wants to form a version of a Business Improvement District or a Neighborhood Improvements District, in which private corporations situated along the Schuylkill River and corporations with vested interest in the park, pay for park maintenance, including that of public art. John Randolph discussed this idea at our first meeting:

SRDC would like to manage the park like a mall—similar to Penn’s Landing Corporation. By making the park into an economic hub with bike and boat rentals and other concessions like restaurants, the value of the park will be optimized and private interests will be able to pay for security and maintenance. My hope is that the park will run itself. The Fairmount Park Commission does not have the budget to administer SRP (Randolph 1996a).

Another issue that has continued significance that was brought to the table at our first meeting is that of the viability of developing the park itself in the timeframe proposed by SRDC. Randolph briefly discussed the history of the park, that the development of the banks of the Schuylkill River for recreation have been an ongoing project for over thirty years. As Bill Hostetter recalls in the previous chapter, the development process has been an ad hoc affair, the result of concerted community effort, as well as the beneficial impact of government whim (the tow lot affair, the legitimization of the community garden). In hindsight, the timeline that Randolph had proposed at our introductory meeting concerning general park development as well as the installation of public art has yet to be fulfilled. This does not surprise residents such as Bill Hostetter who understand the difficulties of developing the park. Looking back on our first meeting, the projected timeframe of the development and public art

installation appears overly optimistic: by 1998 the access structures to the park (the pedestrian bridges over the railroad tracks) would be complete (they have not been and may have to be entirely shelved); by 2000 the park would be completed in its entirety (it has not); by 1998 or 1999, the installation of public art would commence (again, it has not). As Stacy Levy, one of the commissioned artists for public art in SRP, shared with me, she would be happy if the project was completed in the next ten years. The reality of the development and public art process is the exceedingly slow pace involved in planning and implementation.

Discussing Public Art Possibilities

One of our planning meetings was devoted to discussing examples of what “kind” of public art was appropriate for SRP. Presentations by the longtime park landscape architect, John Collins, and project coordinator, Julie Courtney, revealed differences in the way public art is viewed. Collins, architect of the SRP master plan, discussed design aspects and features of the present park, including public art that had been installed as part of the park’s development during the 1980s. Collins’ approach emphasized the seamless integration of public art and landscape design, where public art is more or less an embellishment superimposed on the surface of the design. According to this perspective, public art is one aspect of landscape design—a tool in the assured control of the landscape architect. Thus, Collins actually suggested certain public art projects for particular sites in the park. For example, when Collins discussed the bulkheading to secure the shoreline between Cherry and Vine Streets, he stressed that it could support a public art light installation. In another instance, when discussing the interesting, sheltered environment that the Walnut Street bridge created in SRP, he proposed the installation of a public art floor painting or mosaic beneath the bridge. He also mentioned the possible installation of public art near the proposed marina and amphitheater areas in order to provide gateway opportunities in which to frame integral aspects of the park. Other art projects could emphasize history, according to Collins. A fountain, for example, might commemorate Arendt Corssen, the “founder” of the Schuylkill River. Collins stressed the importance of maintaining the floral integrity of the park by planting only native plant species.

Collins’ proposition to site certain kinds of public art in particular areas underscores his role as a landscape architect. Public art is beautification and the stepchild of landscape design. Years after

the public art selection process, Collins shared with me his views. Playing devil's advocate, yet, still firm in his beliefs, Collins claimed that he preferred "plop" art, that is, public art that is dropped on a given site, as if by some omniscient force, rather than the avant-garde artists that the advisory committee seemed so in favor of. Collins explains his position:

While I think the public art process went very well—a great number and variety of artists applied—I think there was a push on the part of the people on the advisory committee to find avant-garde artists rather than "plop" artists. I think, however, that plop art has a lot of merit. There is a role for art to be integrated with landscape architecture and to function as a landmark. I think this is better than the piles of firemen's boots, hats, and gloves that Mierele Ukeles offers us [Collins is referring to a project in which Mierle Ukeles worked with Los Angeles firefighters—Ukeles' past projects will be examined at this end of this chapter] (Collins 2000).

Perhaps Collins' rhetoric is part and parcel of the gatekeeping we often engage in when rationalizing what we do as professionals. In actual practice, according to one of the "winners" of the SRP public art competition, the collaborative team of Stacy Levy and Winifred Lutz, working with John Collins on their project has been a wonderful experience. Collins' Delta Group had already voiced interest in investigating, through some kind of design strategy, the tidal process of the river—a theme central to the Levy and Lutz's proposed project, which will be explained later. According to the artists, Delta Group co-designed large sections of the project. Levy and Lutz emphasize the collaborative nature of working in public art with a design team—"the thing we have to remember is that the designer is responsible for safety, wheelchair accessibility, and all the other 'real' issues" (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000). An important part of collaboration, Levy reminds us, is remembering that artists often come in at the last minute and "take over the fun part" (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000). Artists must be highly sensitive to the years, in this case, decades, that designers may have spent in developing major projects. According to Winifred Lutz, "When you have people like John Collins who have worked with the nitty-gritty details [of the park] for so many years and have an artist come in and be flamboyant, it can be very disturbing" (Lutz in Levy and Lutz 2000). Levy echoes Lutz's sentiment: "we are eating off the cake that they [the landscape architects] have spent so many years making" (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000).

While Julie Courtney seemed to concur with Collins that public art must be highly sensitive to the site, Courtney indicated that public art can be potentially autonomous from landscape design and yet still be successful. Thus, public art is the work of an artist who may collaborate with a landscape

designer, but is not in the service of the designer. It is the role of the public artist to develop thoughtful ways in which to address the uniqueness of a particular site. In the same meeting in which Collins presented his public art vision, Courtney presented a number of public art projects installed in waterfront contexts, as well as projects she thought were of particularly high quality. Courtney is very fond of public art that interfaces with natural elements intrinsic to given sites. Projects installed on the grounds of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Western Regional Center on Lake Washington, near Seattle, by artists Martin Puryear, Scott Burton, Siah Armajani, George Trakas, and Doug Hollis either examine the relationship between humans and the natural environment, or utilize natural materials for utilitarian purposes (stones carved for seating, for example). Many of the works take their inspiration from maritime themes, or offer intimate gathering places in which to view the lake.

Another project in Washington state by Doug Hollis and Philadelphian Charles Fahlen emphasizes the natural process of tidal action. Their project consisted of curving terraces and seating leading to a circular tidal inlet which also serves as a tide clock. A covered dock viewing area has a wind activated organ-like instrument on its roof. Near Lake Union in Seattle, the artist Elizabeth Conner has devised a time-line installation that guides visitors through a natural and cultural tour of the site using native plant species, recycled paving materials, photographic images, and text.

Another example of public art that heightens people's awareness to natural phenomena through the use of sound is *Wave Organ*, created by Peter Richards and George Gonzales on the Marina Jetty in San Francisco. Overlooking San Francisco Bay, the work consists of thirty concrete pipes, three to four inches in diameter. The site provides visitors with the experience of listening to the changing tides by placing their ears against the exposed ends of the pipes.

John Randolph responded to Julie Courtney's presentation of ecologically sensitive public art by emphasizing that the Schuylkill River is tidal: the tide changes by as much as six feet per day. An art project that highlighted this might be especially rewarding to visitors since many people are not aware of the tide. Indeed, as I just mentioned briefly above, the artist team of Stacy Levy and Winfred Lutz was awarded one of the commissions for a proposal whose aim is to explore the tidal change of the Schuylkill River.

Public Art Themes for SRP and Potential Park Users

A discussion on themes for public art projects and potential park users took place in an informal meeting at John Randolph's house, which overlooks SRP, on February 29, 1996. John Randolph gave a presentation on the proposed uses of the park, stressing that recreational access to the Lower Schuylkill has been non-existent since the industrial revolution. Now that industry has waned along its shores, for the first time in about one hundred years people will again be able to enjoy the river. Unlike the Delaware River, there is limited commercial usage of the Schuylkill. According to Randolph, current active users of the park include bikers, joggers and fisherman. School children currently use the playground and ballpark, but after the park is developed and public art and interpretive displays are constructed, educational opportunities will certainly increase. The river itself offers both recreational and economic opportunity. Boat rentals, tour boats and floating restaurants are all possibilities.

Since we were discussing users and potential users of the park, I mentioned that many people, particularly gay men, know SRP not by its official title, but by its sexual subcultural title "Judy Garland Park." My first summer as a neighborhood resident in 1992 featured the arrest of gay park users for violating the rarely enforced 1 a.m. park curfew. This was followed with protest by the gay community and increased hostility between gay park users and the community bordering the park. Even the gay park users are further differentiated by race—the northern section of the soon-to-be-developed park is frequented by African American gays and known to this community as "Gay Acres." My point was that if the gay park user is heterogeneous, then even "straight" park users must be differentiated according to a myriad of social categories as well. When I asked John Randolph if there was any lingering hostility between the various gay communities and SRP's neighbors, Randolph explained that the dog walkers were now "more of a problem than the gays" (Randolph 1996c).

While on the topic of the park user who does not fit into the family or couple weekend getaway category, I also mentioned that I had encountered a homeless man during one of my excursions in the park. As I approached what I thought was an abandoned tent near 24th and Locust Streets one cold January morning, where pornography, old text books and empty food cans littered the area in

proximity to the forlorn shelter, I was accosted by a man who said “Welcome to my home in all of its humble glory.” I apologized for snooping and promptly left.

Randolph steered the conversation regarding less wholesome park frequenters to other topics. A discussion ensued about possible subject areas that artists might address through public art in SRP. Among the topics mentioned included: history/human events, such as explorers and the past Native American presence; animal life; geology; hydrology; plants; and transportation.

Leah Karp, an African American artist and arts administrator and member of the advisory committee, brought up the issue of a community run performance-staging facility in the park. This facility could be designed by a public artist and administered by community groups for performances thereby giving the community a sense of ownership in the public art process and bring life to the park. Karp gave the example of African American drum corps youth participating in public performances.

We decided that themes for SRP’s public art projects and landscape design should meet the following criteria:

- *Bridge the historical and the abstract;
- *design issues should link or relate to environmental issues;
- *highlight the natural resources of SRP, for example, the river’s six foot tide;
- *native vegetation should be used as design;
- *benefit children and senior citizens;
- *include temporary and seasonal spaces as opportunities for community involvement;
- *give community a sense of ownership;
- *conform to security needs.

While it is difficult to speculate about an audience for public art that does not yet exist, the previous chapter relating potential development strategies for SRP give us some indication. Even seemingly benign aspects of development, public art, in-line skate rental facilities, recreational offerings, and tourism strategies, reveal who the intended users of SRP are. The issue of waterfront leisure activities as an index of social class (and as an indicator of who “counts” in the contemporary city) was examined in Chapter 2, through the work of urban anthropologist, R. Timothy Sieber, and is useful here. As advisory committee member Ann Karlen explained to me, “It is a gentrification

project. In our meetings, Randolph described the audience for the park as athletes, in-line skaters, and cyclists. All the descriptives (sic) had to do with recreation and seemed pretty upper-middle class” (Karlen 1999).

Guidelines for the Selection of Public Art

Discussions regarding guidelines for establishing a public art selection process required three meetings. Chief issues addressed by the guideline sessions were inclusiveness and the notification of the competition to the Philadelphia artist community. As several advisory committee members pointed out, Philadelphia artists often feel alienated by public art competitions that often favor nationally and internationally recognized artists rather than local people. Committee members articulated the need for workshops and outreach to the local artist community. Marsha Moss explained that

many Philadelphia artists feel marginalized by the public art process that often seeks artists of important recognition over local people. We need to present the art plan for the park to the Philadelphia artist community in the form of a workshop. We need to give them a chance. Local artists also seem to have a victim complex—they can be lethargic. So we need to inform them and involve them early on so they are made aware. Essentially, we must be there to ‘train’ artists on how to write proposals regarding public art. A mentoring process must not be neglected (Moss 1996).

Ann Karlen agreed with Marsha Moss: “I organized workshops for the City’s percent-for-art program explaining to artists about the parameters of public art. I was asked to educate artists to market themselves as public artists. I think we should do the same thing with this project” (Karlen 1996). These thoughts prompted us to initiate just such an endeavor—a workshop would signify both an overture on the part of the SRDC to embrace local artists (SRDC would then be doing good public relations) and grant artists an avenue for participation. The workshop would be well publicized in advance in the local weekly papers, on the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance website, as well as in their *Short Subjects* newsletter, and flyer distribution to Old City art galleries.

Ray King, a local Philadelphia public artist who was commissioned to create the large, prism-like columns on the corners of Broad and Washington Streets that serve as gateways to Philadelphia’s Avenue of the Arts, attended a few meetings as an adjunct advisor. While never a full public art advisory committee member (that would have excluded him from the public art competition, which he would enter), his occasional presence as a working artist was important since he was very familiar with the public art application process. King was especially helpful in terms of making the advisory

committee aware of issues or obstacles that artists applying for the SRP commission might face. For example, many public art administrators provide construction documentation—technical information regarding the site—that most artists are ill-equipped to understand. SRDC, he explained, must not alienate artists in this way. Since John Collins, SRP’s landscape architect, has a long-term relationship with the park and experience working with public artists, he can insure that the knowledge be conveyed in easier terms. King suggested that if a prospectus is mailed to artists, that it include a simple site plan on which the artist might be able to sketch. Because of the ongoing commitment of Collins to SRP, public art making “would be a collaborative venture [in which] the professionals [the landscape architect, engineers, surveyors] could perform all of the ‘bog down’ work that often holds up the public art process indefinitely” (King 1996).

The selection committee also identified other important items that would insure an equitable public art competition, while still maintaining a degree of competitiveness that would attract high-caliber artists. The first order of business was to create a prospectus briefly describing SRP, the budget, and application guidelines. The prospectus would then be listed in appropriate journals, including *Public Art Review*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *Art Calendar*, *Competition Hotline*, *FYI* (a publication of the New York Foundation of the Arts) the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance’s *Short Subjects*, local weekly papers, as well as on the internet. Other appropriate venues to inform both artists and the public about the public art competition were the International Sculpture Conference on June 6-9, 1996, which took place in Philadelphia that year, as well as the SRDC’s “Spotlight on the Schuylkill III” conference, October 21, 1996, where artists led discussions about public art. Julie Courtney advised the selection committee to identify public artists that they thought were of particular merit and invite them to apply. Finally, we agreed that it would be appropriate to offer a tour of SRP, before the application deadline, in order to familiarize the artists with the site. The date of the tour would be listed on the prospectus.

Julie Courtney affirmed that “we need to create a place, not an object” (Courtney 1996) and many on the committee agreed that this should be the primary role that public art should play in SRP—the commissioning of disembodied objects plunked down on a given site must be avoided.

Committee members familiar with the development of Penn’s Landing noted that the riverside park lacked a coherent public art plan resulting in art with no spatial context. According to Marsha Moss,

The bad thing about Penn’s Landing is that there is no art plan—no overall development plan—and too much ‘plunk art’ that is not consistent with the space. There has been a total lack of negotiating strategies on the part of the developers and city planners. The main problem is ad hoc development with no vision (Moss 1996).

The committee agreed that one of its goals should be to guarantee the integrity of a public art plan.

Julie Courtney suggested two scenarios: a large commission for a piece in which the artist works closely with the landscape architect creating a significant sense of place in the park *or* several smaller commissions. Penny Bach of the Fairmount Park Art Association contributed to Courtney’s position by phrasing the issue as a question: “should we have a signature piece, which defines a sense of place for the park on a broad basis, or several punctuation marks that will create a number of smaller, intimate places?” (Bach 1996a). If the committee was to select a group of five artists for projects, Bach suggested that “in order to make the competition fair, the five finalists should all have equal budgets. In choosing five artist projects of the same cost and staggering them throughout the park, an opportunity would be provided to create different senses of place” (Bach 1996a).

The actual selection process would consist of the advisory committee acting as jury, reviewing slides and submission materials, and voting on the semi-finalists. The semi-finalists would then be reduced to a list of five finalists, from which a winner (or winners) would be selected.

The timeline for the public art selection process was as follows:

Deadline for slides	October 31, 1996
Jury session	December 4 and 5, 1996
Notification of semifinalists	December 10, 1996
Notification of finalists	January 20, 1997
Finalists presentations	April 1997
Presentations to various city commissions	May 1997
Announcement of artists	June 1997

Selecting the Semi-Finalists

On December 4th and 5th 1996, the advisory committee met in a conference room at the Philadelphia Museum of Art to select the semi-finalists from the 260 submissions from a total of 321 artists (the number of artists was larger than the total numbers of submissions since some artists proposed collaborative projects). Each submission was represented by approximately twenty slides,

projected four at a time. By the end of the first day, and after viewing nearly 6 thousand slides, the advisory committee selected fifty artists for further consideration. The following day, after being presented with further information about the artists selected in the first round and discussing their work, the committee selected twenty-seven semi-finalists. Artists sensitive to notions of site-specificity fared better than those who simply “decorated” outdoor sites, paying little attention to context. As artists were not asked to create models or specifications at this stage in the project, slides of their previous work, in concert with written statements of interest, served as the main criteria for judgment.

Semi-finalists well-known in the public art field included Vito Acconci, Alice Aycock, Malcolm Cochran, Tom Otterness, and George Trakas. Philadelphia and/or regional semi-finalists included Warren Angle, Charles Fahlen, and the collaborative team of Winifred Lutz and Stacy Levy. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, a New York artist known for her time-based, politically and ecologically minded public performances, as well as sculptural work, was an interesting addition, and the only artist from the list known to take public art in less object-oriented directions.

After the first round of jurying, Leah Jaynes Karp, a Philadelphia artist and arts administrator, who is African American, raised the issue of diversity. Were there an adequate number of artists of color represented? The question took to task the methodology of the initial selection process: what were the criteria for inviting particular artists to submit materials for the competition? Were the means in which to notify artists geared towards attracting a diverse group? Were any attempts made to entice artists of color to participate? From a total of sixty artists invited to compete, only six were minorities. Karp’s observation about the lack of diversity was not taken into consideration at this point, as the jurying process resumed “full speed ahead” the next day. However, according to Julie Courtney, Karp had spoken too late. Courtney pointed out that Karp had had an opportunity as an advisory committee member to impact the selection process at an earlier stage. “If Leah [Karp] was concerned with diversity, she should have insured that artists of color were better informed of the competition in the first place (Courtney 1999).” Courtney explained that Karp was encouraged, as were all of the advisory committee, to be proactive in notifying appropriate artists to submit proposals.

Courtney later revealed to me her interest in involving a public artist to work in some capacity with African American fisherman who are often present along the banks of the Schuylkill River.

Courtney had discussed the idea with African American artist, David Hammons, whose exhibition she had organized at the Institute of Contemporary Art a number of years before. Hammons is well known for his provocative outdoor projects that address the politics of race. In a billboard installed for the Washington Project for the Arts, in Washington, D.C., Hammons depicted a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jesse Jackson with text that read “How do ya like me now?” Responding to the double-edged irony, irate black citizens from the neighborhood tore it down. Unfortunately, Hammons, while invited to submit materials to SRDC, never bothered. Courtney had discussed the idea of a public art project involving fisherman with John Randolph, but he was not interested. According to Courtney, “fisherman are not a part of the public vision for the new park” (Courtney 1999).

At the conclusion of the second day, and after twenty-seven semi-finalists were determined, Karp again raised the issue of exclusion. She noted that the advisory committee’s overwhelming whiteness (she was the only African American committee member to attend meetings regularly) discouraged artists of color from participation. In other words, little attempt was made to access the minority artist community, as few were represented in the advisory committee anyway. Rochelle Toner, dean of the Tyler School of Art and a representative of the advisory committee proposed the creation of a commission geared specifically towards recruiting minority artists for the public art competition. A jury would determine the most appropriate artists from this group and add them to the list of semi-finalists. This did not occur. According to Courtney, attempts *were* made to recruit artists of color during the initial selection process and people of color *were* invited to participate as advisory board members. As Courtney discussed in an interview with me, attempts were made at inclusion, but it was obviously difficult to entice more radical artists of color to participate in a public art competition that they might view as status quo, as in the case of David Hammons. Others on the committee, including Marsha Moss, a public art curator and consultant and Susan Davis, director of the Fine Arts Program, Redevelopment Authority, have intimated to me in interviews that it is unethical in a public art competition to add artists to the pool of submissions at the conclusion of the jury process (Davis 1999; Moss 2000). Diversity needs to be reinforced from the beginning and it is the responsibility of the advisory committee, as well as the project director, to seek out an assortment of artists from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and artistic strategies.

Penny Bach, Director of the Fairmount Park Art Association does not believe the public art process needs to be as rigid in terms of its openness to alternative strategies if the process in any way seems problematic. If the process appears flawed, public art administrators have the responsibility to reopen the search. However, this needs to be carefully considered according to budget considerations, time constraints, and the overall will of the administrators to “go back to the drawing board” (Bach 2000). Although Bach believes that Karp should have spoken sooner and directed her energies toward contacting artists she thought were of merit to apply for the competition, Karp had every right to have raised the issue of the lack of minority applicants. However, Bach thinks that Karp did not intend that the process should have stopped there—scrapped and reevaluated: “It was more of an observation than a call to action” (2000). Bach reminded me that the issue of race is inherently complex in the public art process. In a public art project for a North Philadelphia community, African American jurors on the selection committee voted out most of the African American artists who had applied for the project. Many of the black artists who had applied were muralists and community representatives had decided that they did not want a mural for their project, since murals signified the kind of art often seen in poorer neighborhoods. So the short list became overwhelmingly white. Here, an opportunity was created for African American artists, but what was offered by the pool of applicants was not what members of the community wanted. According to Bach, “the opportunity may be created [and] you may think that the issue of potential racism has been addressed, but there may be circumstances that you are not thinking about that happen to come up. That does not mean we should not try to be more inclusive” (2000).

After the semi-finalists were selected on the last day of jurying, the advisory committee was disbanded, and a smaller group of jurors was appointed to select the finalists. This was rather shocking, as the advisory committee was never notified about this until a letter arrived in the mail informing advisory committee members that a public art consultant, Patricia Fuller, and “key” advisory committee members, including Penny Bach of the Fairmount Park Art Association, Carol Gangewere of the Fairmount Park Commission, John Collins of the Delta Group, and Julie Courtney and John Randolph of SRDC, met to select six finalists for personal interviews. The letter was dated March 7, 1997, three months after our two-day jury session. As Susan Davis has explained to me, the disbanding

of the SRP public art advisory committee was unusual. As is often the case, in the public art selection process, the committee remains the same throughout the duration of the project. However, according to Davis, “there is a hierarchy in town in terms of public art, so Julie Courtney and John Randolph selected people from the public art sector they believed were the best representatives for the finalist jury” (Davis 1999).

When I asked Penny Bach if this was problematic from the perspective of keeping the selection committee the same throughout the process, she indicated that it depends on the goals of the public art process: “If what you are trying to do is not create an avenue of participation for a lot of people, but find out the most about the finalists, in order to know which of them would be best for this project, then the way it was done in my view was the better way” (Bach 2000). Still, according to Bach, if SRDC knew that the committee was going to be reduced in size from the very beginning, they should have informed everyone—but this might have been a last minute decision, a realization “that having so many people was not the best way to get the best possible outcome” (2000). As Bach explains, since the smaller committee was composed of people who would have to be working with the artists (with the exception of Bach and Patricia Fuller, who served as outside advisors) then it made sense to involve only these people directly. According to Bach,

[Fuller and myself] were the ones watching the whole process—the human context—of how the semifinalists, during the interview stage, were interacting with John Randolph and Julie Courtney. The walks that we, as the smaller group, took with the artists in the park, listening to the kinds of questions that John Randolph and John Collins asked the artists, the issues that Carol Gangwere [of the Fairmount Park Commission] raised—this is the kind of interaction that you simply cannot have when a larger group is present.

Between December 1996 and March 1997, the revised selection committee had chosen six artists/artist teams as finalists: Winifred Lutz and Stacy Levy, George Trakas, Vito Acconci, Malcolm Cochran, Alice Aycock, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles. I had assumed the advisory committee had the option of continuing to participate in the public art selection process. Upon receiving this information, I asked Julie Courtney if I could participate in interviews with the finalists. Unfortunately, they had already interviewed all the finalists but one—Mierle Laderman Ukeles. I agreed to at least sit in for this interview. In late July 1997, I received a letter informing me of the decision that Ukeles and the team of Levy and Lutz had been awarded the commissions.

The Public Art Process: Where was the Community?

The issues that Leah Karp raised during the jurying process in early December 1996 and the problem of public art and democracy are a part of larger issues endemic to American politics in general—the problem of representation in which experts determine and speak for the needs of the “people.” But how do we determine the public art constituency and address their needs? Do we take into consideration the myriad of current and potential park users? Does community signify those who live in the immediate neighborhood, all of Philadelphia, or people from beyond Philadelphia city limits as well? Do we invite local residents onto public art advisory committees?

Determining the audience for public art and the community of SRP users is undoubtedly difficult and reflects the theoretical and practical problems from which public art continues to suffer. On one hand, in my experience with the SRDC public art advisory committee, a neighborhood’s proximity to site qualifies “the community.” In this particular case, arts professionals and other “respected” neighborhood residents (residents, who, in the case of the SRP public art selection process, were also arts professionals, first and foremost, or in the case of John Randolph, the director of the development council overseeing the development of the park) serving on the advisory committee represented the interests of the entire neighborhood outlying the park. Patricia Phillips suggests that in cases such as SRDC (and with tongue in cheek) “we have arrived at some reliable formula for articulating the precise radius that distinguishes that community’s interest from the larger field of public life” (1988: 94). This line of argument establishes a dichotomy between the local community and the general public, implying a fundamental conflict between those inside a particular neighborhood, area, or city, and those outside. The results of this kind of thinking were apparent in the controversy over the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. Which community should have had the most authority in approving its design? The family members of slain veterans? The office workers who work nearby? The public at large? Similarly, in the case of SRP, who is the community that should be consulted? The people in the immediate vicinity of the park? All Philadelphians? The gay men who cruise the park at night? The homeless who often spend their nights in the park? But does not the term “public art” reflect a de facto inclusiveness enveloping not only those living close to a proposed project but literally anyone who wishes to use a given space? As Patricia Phillips has

discussed, despite generous attempts to include the local community, the very notion of public art assumes that the space in which the work is situated is part of the collective citizenry—in other words, public space and art is either communal or it is not (and if it is not, we must devise a better term for “public art”) (Phillips 1988: 94)

Penny Bach, who has worked in public art for over twenty years, acknowledges that multiple publics always exist, but how and when a public becomes involved changes with each project. She explains that

One of the dangers in the public art process is that we create a situation where everyone thinks that they have equal right and access in designing the piece, so we wind up with something designed by committee. The artist’s vision—the whole reason we go to the artist in the first place—then gets recombined in such a way that it no longer is either respectful of the way the artist was thinking, or is completely different from what the artist had intended (Bach 2000).

As public art administrators, we must recognize the multiplicity of interests, and make sure they are all addressed, but at the same time, Bach argues, they do not all have to play an equal role. Thus, the community is really a complex matrix with, at times, conflicting beliefs and includes the political arena, the Fairmount Park Commission, local residents, potential users of the park, private development interests and concessionaires, etc. (Bach 2000).

Bach also explains that public art is not a monolithic entity. Some projects, such as “Culture in Action” and Philadelphia’s “New Land Marks” (see Chapter 3) are designed to involve the community first and foremost. The process of dialogue may be just as important as the actual art object. However,

Just because certain projects have involved the community in a certain way and have been successful does not mean all public projects thereafter have to happen that way. What you have to do in devising a public art process is create a methodology that best supports what you want in terms of outcome. Process is very important to me, but it is not worth anything if the product is not worth doing. So in a way, public art is like working backward. If you want to have a great product—what do you need to do up front to assure that? That may mean talking to people at the bar, but it may not. What would I really accomplish by asking people at the bar what kind of public art they want? Maybe we need to involve people at the bar at another stage of the process. Maybe that needs to be another stage down the road. I don’t think necessarily that having community members involved in artist selection is a strength or a weakness—it depends on the nature of the project. It certainly can have its obstacles. When you have people involved in the selection process who really don’t understand what the terrain of public art is all about, they are not taken seriously and I think that is terrible. To invite people into a process and then not take them seriously is wrong (Bach 2000).

In the case of SRP, as Julie Courtney also explained to me, community initiated, process oriented, public art was not the goal of the project. Depending on what the organization sponsoring the public art desires, there may or may not be the need for involving local residents. Having local residents on the selection committee who really do not understand the terrain of public art may be problematic since they may not be taken seriously, and this is very wrong, according to Bach, as it proves alienating to all parties involved. The real challenge, according to Bach, is to get people to become involved on their own terms; keeping people informed about the stages of the public art process is the responsibility of the host organization so people have the option of entering into a dialogue when they feel is appropriate. If informing the community is part of the public art plan for SRP, then “the time is now.”

While involving the residential community every step of the way may not have been a stated objective for SRDC’s public art plan, informing them about the public art projects has yet to occur, despite indication in the guidelines that this would take place. This could be a simple oversight, or it may be the result of the hubris of the director of SRDC, who, because of his vested interest in the park and the fact he lives adjacent to it, has assumed that his interests are the interests of all neighborhood residents. One advisory committee representative, Ann Karlen, even questioned the interests of the SRDC as self-serving, because of Randolph’s status as a local resident and the fact that he feels he can speak for the needs of the entire community (Karlen 1999). According to Bill Hostetter, many see Randolph’s operation as a “one man show” (Hostetter 2000). Whether Randolph actually believes he represents the community as a single individual is beside the point—what is important is that, for whatever reason, local residents were not included in the public art planning process, they have not been recently involved in the development planning process in general, nor have they been informed of recent developments in terms of public art projects. This is particularly a glaring problem since attempts were made to inform local artists of the public art competition. Obviously, people on the advisory committee felt strongly about not alienating this particular constituency. It was indicated during our planning meetings that one of the responsibilities of SRDC was to educate the local community about plans for public art in the park. Yet, this has yet to occur—not even as an after-the-fact attempt to inform people about the selection of finalists. Part of the problem, according to Karlen,

was that no one on the advisory committee specialized in the community process, nor had the experience of working with communities on art related projects.

Whether or not the public art plan was devised to involve the local community, neglecting to ask for input from park neighbors has proved alienating. Julia Gold, an independent curator and critic who lives at 24th and Waverly Streets, about two blocks from the park, felt left out of the process.

According to Gold, SRDC

did not even attempt to provide lip service to an idea of community. It would have been a much smarter idea to inform the community about public art and educate people who might be puzzled about public art—inform people at the beginning of the project. It was seemingly a very closed process (Gold 2000).

While Gold was vocal in her belief that the community should have been brought in to the project, she did not have any ideas regarding the kind of public art she would like in the park. Rather, she sees the artist as the person responsible for the creative process. “I think anytime you let the artists do the thinking rather than having an idea in mind and going about having artists execute that idea—we leave the process open—we will always be surprised” (Gold 2000).

Similarly, Richard Kirby, who lives at 25th and Lombard Streets, was troubled by a public art process that was never publicized or held accountable to community perspectives. According to Kirby,

I think the SRDC let us down a bit in terms of not asking the community to participate from the very beginning. The park users could have been asked to come to meetings and to see whether they would like to serve on the selection committee along with the art experts. It may be difficult to work with people in this capacity, but the outcome would be significant. Whether or not the selection committee would want to ask young people to participate is another story, but at least their concerns should be voiced in some manner. As you go along, accessing the voices of local people is important. Informing people through mailings, door to door flyering, and community meetings about the process of selecting public would all be good. Since the idea of community is such a difficult one, the process of bringing people together through public art selection and designing the park would evolve a community, you would create a community as you went (Kirby 2000).

Kirby also had interesting ideas regarding public art that resonate with current developments in the field. He would like to see funding spent on temporary public art works and performances rather than simply supporting permanent outdoor art. Both Kirby and public art advisory committee members Marsha Moss and Penny Bach have emphasized that it is still not too late to invite the community to a forum in order to discuss the public art projects for the park (Kirby 2000, Moss 2000, Bach 2000).

However, local resident Bill Hostetter doubts the community spirited intentions of SRDC in general, and the public art process in particular. According to Hostetter:

John Randolph's operation is not a community-based operation, it is a one-man show. In the past there was intense involvement on the part of the community in the development [of the early phases] of the park. Granted, there was not much of an interest [on the part of the local community] in making decisions about public art, but the community was still asked if they wanted to be involved. But under John Randolph, no one was asked about anything (Hostetter 2000).

Sarah Brenson, president of CCRA, was similarly offended that SRDC failed to notify or ask the community for its input regarding the Stacy Levy and Winifred Lutz project. Having been informed that the artists and SRDC were to go in front of the Fairmount Park Commission to present the proposal, Sarah Brenson contacted the Fairmount Park Commission and stated that she was surprised that SRDC would inform the Park Commission before local residents. The Park Commission cancelled the meeting and rescheduled it so that interested residents might attend. John Randolph, according to Brenson, promised that in the future the residential community would be better informed of any developments (Brenson 2000). Brenson relates that a public forum took place only *after* she complained to the Park Commission. She explains:

The nearest that we got to having a public forum for the art was me complaining to the Fairmount Park Commission. Having heard that the artists were going to propose the project to the Commission, that they were going to hear about the public art project before the neighborhood community had a chance to hear about it frustrated me. I don't think John Randolph is going to change his ways, although he apologized for not informing the community and said that from now on he would. I told John and the Park Commission that I thought the art project was a great idea but that Center City residents should be informed first and that we would communicate our views to the public authority about our feelings—that would be the Park Commission. After our complaint, he did go to us first, but I had to call the Park Commission and get the presentation off the schedule, so we could be heard first.

Brenson and Nancy Feltz, who sits on the board of CCRA, support the Levy and Lutz project, but in varying degrees, and believe it would be an attractive addition to SRP, despite misgivings regarding SRDC's lack of generosity with public art information. According to Feltz,

One of Sarah Brenson's priorities when she became the new CCRA president was to get a grip on John Randolph. When he put up the public art proposals to the Fairmount Park Commission [for review], she had them yanked off the agenda—to show him that you must go to the community first before you got the Park Commission.

I have a high regard for Julie Courtney and for the projects she has done in the past, like the exhibition at the prison [Courtney curated an exhibition at Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary, entitled "Prison Sentences: The Prison as Site/The Prison

as Subject”]. I respect the artists. I have a high opinion of Winifred Lutz and do not know that much about Stacy Levy. But from what I gather, they are an inspired choice for the project. I find the tidal pool idea [that they propose] hard to visualize and I find it hard to see how people will not fall into it and be swept away, and I don’t see how it will not leave behind ugly mud that remains when the tide changes. But this does not mean that it is unsafe or unattractive either. I think it is important that the artists are choosing to focus on nature—tidal action in this particular river. We forget that the city is part of the dynamics of nature (Feltz 2000).

Brenson has stated that the art itself is not problematic (in fact, as I will explain shortly, Brenson wrote a letter from the CCRA to the Park Commission in support of the project), but the manner in which SRDC has handled the community is. Brenson clarifies this position:

[Randolph] did not want us to have access to a public body and tell them what we thought of [the public art proposals]. In other words, he did not want to let us do what we eventually did, which was for the Center City Residents Association to be informed about the project. It was good for him that we all really liked the project. It is not the art that was the problem, but the way Randolph assumed that he did not have to propose the project to a community to get feedback (Brenson 2000).

Jeff Barker, president of the Friends of Schuylkill River Park seemingly maintained a distance from being openly critical of John Randolph’s community relations regarding the public art process when I spoke to him. He, like Brenson and Feltz, support the Lutz and Levy tidal pool public art installation in principle. Barker relates:

CCRA and Friends of Schuylkill Park members present at the Fairmount Park Commission meeting to hear the presentation on the public art project for SRP were in favor of the tidal pool piece. The only reservations that we had were who was going to maintain it. Ideally it should be a low maintenance installation. Although the artists presented it as a low maintenance piece, we were skeptical (Barker 2000).

Barker’s underscoring of maintenance issues, I speculate, is the result of his concern with maintenance in SRP in general. His organization’s chief responsibility is maintaining the park through fundraising and volunteer clean-up efforts, as the Fairmount Park Commission’s limited budget cannot cover the cost of maintaining SRP.

The delay in the Park Commission meeting worked out to the advantage of Levy and Lutz, according to the artists, since it gave them more time to prepare (Levy and Lutz 2000). Even before the official presentation in front of the board of park commissioners, the artists met with the Fairmount Park Commission staff twice in order to seek input in terms of possible problems. It is important to relate this aspect of the public art process because the Fairmount Park Commission, as governing body for all Philadelphia urban parks, represents an important perspective and the interaction between this

agency and the presenting artists reveals the difficulties in the bureaucratic process artists must endure. Since their proposed project *Confluences: The Flows of the Schuylkill* (which will be explained in detail, below) involved the creation of a tide pool on the Schuylkill shore, the Park Commission staff was very worried about people drowning in the pool. According to Stacy Levy,

We would have to create allies [with members of the Fairmount Park Commission staff] and have to figure out issues that would bother the staff, so we could prepare ourselves for what would be problems in front of the commission, at the official meeting. This was a way to vet the proposal. The staff pointed out potentially big problems with safety. After we met with them the first time, we took their recommendations, went back to our model, and incorporated fencing into the design. We cutout an access stairway, and made some other changes. They wanted us to get rid of what they saw as “attractive nuisances”—not wanting people to fall into the river and drown.

We went back to the staff again with the changes to our model and they were much more supportive. Some of the staff were very, very quiet the first time around and we did not know how to interpret it. We either thought they were in intense pain or they hated us. We later learned that they were terrified of the project in terms of safety (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000).

The official meeting in front of the Fairmount Park Commission board was very trying for the artists. While the artists felt that what they were designing was an important contribution to the city, to the Park Commission it was just another item on the agenda. “We were told that we only had five minutes for our presentation. We had sent the entire group of commissioners a packet before the meeting and not one person had read it” (Lutz in Levy and Lutz 2000). According to the artists, some of the commissioners’ attention spans seemed in short supply, as one official read the newspaper for the entire presentation, and other people ate ice cream and seemed more concerned with the process of eating than listening. The reception the commissioners gave their proposal was very hostile. They were obsessed with the fact that the tide pool would attract not only potential drowning victims, but slime, debris and other “grunge.” One older commissioner, according to Levy and Lutz, wanted dimensions of the tidal pool opening and kept repeating that you had to provide dimensions when proposing a project such as this to the Park Commission. The meeting would have to be cancelled and postponed if dimensions were not available. “Of course we had dimensions for everything, but he was being so impatient. It was like the old boys could not rest until they had their numbers” (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000). The issue of community involvement and response was also raised by the commission. Luckily, despite the fact that Sarah Brenson had complained to the commission regarding the lack of

communication on the part of SRDC with local residents, Brenson, on behalf of the CCRA, had written a letter of endorsement to the Fairmount Park Commission, in support of the Levy and Lutz proposal. So the artists wielded this letter and, given the clout of CCRA, it registered as community support in the eyes of the Park Commission. The commissioners then held a vote. To the amazement of the artists, given the cantankerousness of the commissioners and their general lack of enthusiasm, they approved the plan, in *concept*. “They wanted us to come back at a later date and prove to them that it would not become a cesspool” (Lutz in Levy and Lutz 2000). The artists, as of this writing, are preparing to conduct a number of tests to determine how much debris collects in the water near the proposed site using a screen similar to the baleen of a whale. They will also immerse a piece of sample concrete—the same material that will be used in the construction of the tidal pool—in order to gauge how much residue collects on the sample as an indication of what may build-up on the actual piece.

I return now to the issue of SRDC’s lack of effort in bringing the neighboring community into the public art process. Despite this fact, community interest and orchestrated effort in the development of SRP have been historically strong. As mentioned previously, neighborhood residents were active in lobbying for the creation of the park, filing lawsuits against the city during the Rizzo administration, and striking deals with the city in order to get development underway. In the 1970s and 80s, community members participated in both the planning of the park and public art projects. Bill Hostetter recalls lively discussions centered on passive vs. active use of the park, during the planning process for Phase I in 1976-77 (Hostetter 2000). John Collins, the landscape architect for SRP, remembers presenting the work of several artists for a public art project during the initial phase of development at a community meeting. People voted for the artist they believed was most appropriate for the park—selecting Peter Rockwell, who created the fountain sculpture (Collins 2000). Since John Randolph launched SRDC to oversee the development of the park, the community has been less involved.

There are a number of reasons why community involvement has decreased, which do not necessarily reflect a lack of enthusiasm regarding public art, but reflect more about the attitudes of the local residents I spoke with toward development in SRP in general and the attitudes of these informants toward SRDC in particular. The first reason stems from the structure of Randolph’s

development organization, a private effort directed by the vision of an individual who raises money not only to fund the development of the park, but to pay his salary and those employed by SRDC. The culture of SRDC does not lend itself to grass roots public outreach, since, in a sense, the days of community organized, voluntary efforts to develop SRP are over—volunteers oversaw the development of the park through the 1980s. As I will explain below, Bill Hostetter sees the SRDC as a “one man show,” accountable to its board and corporate supporters, not a “community-based operation,” where neighborhood people are asked to participate. The SRDC makes its supporters known in its events literature, which, as Hostetter points out, are covered with corporate logos. According to Hostetter, during zoning meetings two years ago to change the zoning of a site from recreation to parking, in order to build a parking lot for the Locust on the Park condominiums at 25th and Locust Streets, John Randolph sided with the Dranoff development corporation in converting the zoning. Hostetter saw this as a loss for the park, since a large area of land re-zoned for a parking lot made less land available for future park space. Hostetter explained that this was an example of a corporate interest paying off a possible adversary. According to Hostetter, “Dranoff’s logo appears on SRDC materials, so it is obvious that Dranoff pays John [Randolph], and John supports Dranoff” (Hostetter 2000).

Community participation has decreased in the development of the park because some residents see development itself as a problem. The Friends of Schuylkill Park, who are acquainted with the difficulties of park maintenance, claim that it is already very difficult to maintain the developed portion of SRP and that extending the park will only increase the difficulty in this endeavor. While they are not opposed to the development of the bicycle path, they oppose large-scale development. Furthermore, residents, represented by CCRA, see a fully developed park as threatening to their lifestyle. Parking is scarce in the neighborhood and increased vehicular traffic poses a congestion problem.

According to Hostetter, it is difficult to even address the issue of public art in SRP because the installation of the art is dependent on landscape design, neither of which can be realized at the present time because of a lack of adequate funds. While Hostetter saw the plans for the Winifred Lutz and Stacy Levy collaborative public art installation and thought it “related to the river and site very

well,” he is very pessimistic about whether the project, or the park in general, will ever be completed.

According to Hostetter,

There has been no community support for developing the rest of the park, the community has not been mobilized or asked for their input, there is no political will, and while you can raise money to run a lobbying organization, you cannot raise enough money to develop the park itself. It is hard to imagine that corporate Philadelphia, or City Council will fund the park, unless there is some substantial public support (Hostetter 2000).

While it is difficult to ascertain SRDC’s position on who constitutes the community of users for a fully developed SRP, SRDC has, at times, embraced the concept of park user as “outsider”—this was evident in the speakers who presented at the “Spotlight On the Schuylkill III” conference, despite opposition by CCRA to limit the scale of development along the Schuylkill River. According to those in the tourist-entertainment field, “outsider” does not simply mean Philadelphians who live outside the immediate SRP neighborhood; following the arguments presented by Wilson, Norris, Slye, and Levitz in the last chapter, SRDC’s ideal park visitor is the regional tourist—a non-Philadelphian with a disposable income. If the developed SRP is to benefit the new tourist economy, it must draw the kind of visitors who would be willing to spend the night in a hotel. A corollary to this mode of thought is that indigenous folk take for granted the wonderful attractions of their own city; it takes the perspective of an outsider to truly appreciate these amenities (plus clever marketing campaigns aimed at suburbanites to prompt urban tourism). It appears that the most important user is ultimately an outsider willing to spend money in the city since this is the user that will best be able to sustain the future park.

The issue of community is further complicated by the kind of people chosen for the public art advisory committee. Following the prescription makeup of many public art advisory committees, most SRP committee members were art professionals. No advisory committee member represented the vestigial Irish community adjacent to the southern border of the park, dog walkers, fisherman, neighborhood associations, or gay groups—all who currently use or live near the park. Community voices with obvious ties to the park, such as the neighborhood group, the Friends of Schuylkill Park, who administer fundraising for maintenance and voluntary cleanup efforts, were also not invited to participate on the advisory committee. While it is a subject for debate regarding whether community members make good advisory committee candidates, SRDC’s relationship with CCRA has been strained because SRDC failed to adequately inform and involve the group in the development of the

park and public art plan. This might have been avoided if a representative had been invited on the committee.

An Analysis of the Public Art Process as Collective Activity

Howard Becker writes in reference to art worlds: “the artist works in the center of a network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome” (Becker 1982: 25). I argue that the public art world is no different. In this section, I will utilize my ethnographic experience on the SRP public art advisory committee at times contrasting it with my curatorial experience in museums, as an example of what Becker calls art worlds—the network of cooperation involved in the creation of works of art. For an anthropological understanding of the public art process, I must underscore the importance of that process itself, to limit the focus on the collective activity that constitutes this particular art world. The art object or product may be the ultimate goal of any given art world, but it is the elucidation of collective activity that is of significance for both sociologists and anthropologists. Furthermore, I have only had ethnographic access to the selection process, as the public art itself has yet to be produced. There are two important aspects of art worlds that Becker contributes that have particular resonance with SRP’s public art process: conventions and division of labor. I will use these concepts in order to critically comment on my experience.

According to Becker, “people who cooperate to produce a work of art usually do not decide things afresh. Instead they rely on earlier agreements now become customary, agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things in that art” (Becker 1982: 29). There are several conventions of the public art world that played important roles in the public art selection process in which I participated: committee decision making, the idea that public art must be site-specific, and the idea that public art must appeal to a wider audience. As I will explain, each of these issues are conventions within public art.

In the world of public art, it is conventional that aesthetic judgments—“gatekeeping,” or to phrase this more explicitly, the manner in which artists are chosen—relies, very often, on a juried process. From my discussions with those who have been involved in public art on an ongoing basis, the idea of making decisions by committee is standard practice. However, even before the jury can make decisions about which artists are best suited for particular public art projects, there is a

conventional “fleshing out” of guidelines, an attempt to create an appropriate selection methodology for the project at hand. The creation of subcommittees in order to address such issues as public art themes and selection guidelines is also a convention within public art. The SRP public art plan was based, in part, on models for the selection of public art articulated in a text entitled *Going Public: A Field Guide To Developments in Art in Public Places*. Julie Courtney, new to the world of public art, used this guide in organizing SRP’s public art process. It is considered an important guide in developing the administrative structure for the selection and realization of public art projects, making clear the conventions of this particular art world so professionals do not have to reinvent the process each time a new project is mounted. Pam Korza, editor of *Going Public*, writes,

By centralizing some of the best knowledge and experience in the country into one resource, *Going Public* has done a considerable amount of the legwork for those who are new to public art. Through the experience of several model programs [reflecting programs of the participants in the NEA Public Art Policy task forces as well as others], we hope to prevent unnecessary reinvention of the administrative wheel while encouraging inventive artistic directions (Korza 1988: 8).

The guideline parameters for SRP’s public art process were made available to interested artists in the form of a prospectus, a request for applications, which is a critical component in the process.

The selection of art by jury is not unusual in the museum system, but in my experience as a museum professional, it is often reserved in the selection of emerging artists for inclusion in exhibitions in regional or locally focused institutions. Large juried survey shows of “cutting edge” art such as the Whitney Biennial are exceptional. Museum curating usually does not aspire to democratic models of inclusion, the way public art (supposedly) attempts to do. It is a given that museums choose to exhibit artists based on institutional politics, available money, favor reciprocity (benefactors donate money or art for the exhibition of specific artists), etc., but the subjectivity of the individual curator still plays a significant role. What kind of art s/he likes, which trend s/he believes has particular importance at a certain time, which artist or movement s/he thinks merits re-examination: these are issues that filter into the curatorial decision making process according to my experience as a curator. The board, the director, and other staff members trust the curator to make decisions about art. Curators, again, based on my experience, do not base their practice on committee consensus, although they may use a committee to foster dialogue in the decision making process. Museums do not usually employ committees to decide what art is appropriate for a particular viewing public.

For reasons that are difficult to answer, as I have related in the previous section, public art, according to what I have witnessed on the SRP advisory committee and my knowledge of the discipline in general, aspires to a democratic idealism of selection by committee, despite the problematic notion of democracy on which the process rests. In the case of SRP, “democracy” excluded logical advisory committee members, such as neighborhood residents.

Aside from the utilization of an advisory committee as a jury for the selection of public art, another convention that I can proclaim from my experience is the predilection for site-specific art, or art that creates a “sense of place,” as advisory committee members mentioned. This convention evolved from the intersection of the history of public art with the history of contemporary sculpture. As I discussed in Chapter 3, 1960s sculptors developed a practice whereby the art they created was intrinsic to the context of a particular site. At about the same time, public art professionals acknowledged that the “hero on the horse” and the “turd in the plaza” (also referred to as “plop” or “plunk” art) had outlived their usefulness. Public art now needed to address the environment in which it would be situated. This understanding became conventionalized within public art practice, I would speculate, when, in 1974, the National Endowment for the Arts added the stipulation to its Art in Public Places guidelines that art must be “appropriate to a the immediate site” (Art in Public Places quote from Lacy 1995: 23). The notion that the public art selected for SRP should be site-specific was stressed throughout the public art process. A presentation by Julie Courtney early on in the public art process, on February 21, 1996, focused on existing public art projects that she thought were of particular merit. None of the examples were of isolated sculptural objects, but instead, featured work by artists who were highly attuned to the history or natural elements of given sites. Committee members, particularly Marsha Moss and Penny Bach, underscored that public art has an obligation to create a sense of place for SRP and discussed contemporary Philadelphia failures, such as Penn’s Landing, where public art fails to accomplish this goal. The selection of the collaborative team of Stacy Levy and Winifred Lutz demonstrates the attention to the convention of site-specificity since these artists propose just such a project. As I will explain shortly, Levy and Lutz’s *Confluences: The Flows of the Schuylkill* focuses on perhaps the primary feature of SRP, the Schuylkill River itself, highlighting its tidal action. The tide of the river was mentioned in the outset of the public art process,

and was listed as one of the themes that public art should possibly address, instituted at our theme committee meeting on February 29, 1996.

A corollary to the convention of site-specificity in public art is the notion that public art must appeal to a wider audience than that usually engaged by contemporary art that resides in museums and galleries. Since public art is located outdoors in spaces where any number of disparate individuals may encounter it, it must be accessible to audiences who may lack the competencies that are necessary for understanding contemporary art. For example, at our theme committee meeting, John Randolph stressed that a potential audience for public art in SRP are the schoolchildren who utilize the park for recess and science projects. Public art should take into consideration the needs of a younger audience—an audience who historically has used the park and whose use of it would only increase once the park was completed. Leah Karp made it known that she supported public art that would give the communities who frequent SRP a sense of ownership. Examples such as the controversy regarding Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, related in Chapter 3, in which office workers' complaints regarding the sculpture's domineering effect on public space precipitated its removal, illustrate the need for public art to use a "language" understandable to a wider audience. *Tilted Arc* might have proven perfectly acceptable to the contemporary art audience (and this was seemingly demonstrated by the museum professionals who supported Serra during the hearings to remove the work), but it failed in addressing the needs of the larger public—an unspecialized audience—who encountered the sculpture on a daily basis.

Public art, as was discussed in reference to the convention of the advisory committee, relies on a division of labor, as do all art worlds, as Becker elaborates (Becker 1982: 5-14). The members of the public art advisory committee bring different perspectives to the table that contribute to the collective activity of the whole, depending on their occupation, ethnicity, or their various conceptual frameworks which enter into the process. Here, I show how advisory committee members contribute to the public art process by using personalized knowledge and experience—unconsciously (or consciously) playing the roles required in facilitating the process.

Advisory committee members articulate different beliefs as to what role public art should play in SRP. John Collins, the landscape architect, believes public art is an aspect of landscape design rather

than the expression of an individual artist—he perceived as problematic the more avant-garde perspectives expressed by others on the advisory committee regarding public art. According to Collins, the landscape architect should work with an artist who carries out the design vision of the architect. Julie Courtney, on the contrary, thinks that public art is the work of an artist who may collaborate with a landscape designer, but is not in service of the designer. It is the role of the artist to develop thoughtful ways in which to engage the uniqueness of a particular site.

A number of advisory committee members had significant experience in public art administration and this fact showed during the course of the public art selection process for SRP. Penny Bach stressed the importance of equity in the distribution of the budget for the public art projects; emphasized the ways in which money might be saved by commissioning functional public art (like seating and lighting, for example) and by dovetailing major landscape design with public art construction. Marsha Moss advocated for Philadelphia artists and suggested that they be educated about the SRP public art competition and in the public art application process through a workshop administered through SRDC.

Leah Karp—the only African American person who regularly attended committee meetings—perhaps because of past racist experiences in arts administration and her belief that public art should reflect more community-based issues, mentioned on numerous occasions the need for art that provides people with a sense of ownership. She suggested a performance staging facility that could be designed by a public artist, but would be administered by different community interests to reflect differences. Karp gave an example of African American drum corps youth participating in public performances. Karp was very vocal during the review process when the committee examined artists' slides, tentative proposals, and artists' credentials. After the final round of jurying, Karp expressed concern for the lack of diversity in the applicant pool.

As an anthropologist in training and arts administrator who has followed recent developments in so-called “new genre” public art (see Chapter 3), I often raised such questions as, “who is the community for public art in SRP?” and “how will they be integrated into the process?” With the institutionalization of multiculturalism and identity politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s, came the practice of stressing and investigating the concept of “public” in public art. Suzanne Lacy, editor of

Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art distinguishes public art of the recent past based purely on aesthetics rather than an examination of audience from “new genre public art,” which adopts the public as its “operative concept and quest” (Lacy 1995: 20). As I discussed in Chapter 3, such ideas have been explored in exhibitions such as “Culture in Action” and Philadelphia’s upcoming “New Land Marks,” in which communities initiate public art projects. Since some of this art can be highly ephemeral and process oriented—more performative than object oriented—I was informed by Julie Courtney that this kind of art making was not appropriate for the SRP project as SRDC wanted long-term, outdoor sculpture projects. Furthermore, as Penny Bach, Director of the Fairmount Park Art Association has emphasized, community investigatory processes are simply not always part of the public art process, despite what I perceived as precedents set by new developments within public art. However, one would think that SRDC would at least want to ascertain what residents of the neighborhood bordering the park—the most obvious, if not still problematic, manifestation of “the public”—would want in terms of public art. Their views were never taken into consideration.

While never adequately involved in the SRP public art process (and thus absent from the official process) local residents, a significant audience once public art is installed on site, are still an important component of the public art world’s division of labor, since some, as I have indicated in the previous section with the example of the CCRA, have the power to make or break the public art process. Local residents have been, for the most part, silent on the direction public art should take in the park, although many have either vocalized a feeling of regret that they were either not consulted in the process, or not informed about the outcome. In terms of the selection of art, many have indicated that they feel comfortable with experts making decisions about art, as long as the residents have input in the final instance. To give credit to both the selection committee and the artists, residents who somehow found out about the Stacy Levy and Winifred Lutz project all agreed that it would be ideal for SRP. Even those who do not like aspects of the proposed development of SRP, such as concessions, rental facilities, and restaurants, and have problems with the manner in which SRDC conducts business, concur that the Levy and Lutz project appears admirable. In order to see why the public art projects have received support, it now necessary to examine them in detail. I begin, first, with Mierle Laderman Ukeles proposal, which is still in its very early stages and has not come before

either the Fairmount Park Commission or the CCRA, and then I will explore the Levy and Lutz proposal. I will provide some background on the artists, as well as examples of their work in order to place their activity in context.

Proposed Public Art Projects for SRP and Context on the Artists

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

For nearly thirty years, Mierle Laderman Ukeles has created performance-based public projects which incorporate the lives of urban workers as active participants. Since 1970, Ukeles has been the unsalaried artist-in-residence for New York City's sanitation department. From this self-created "official" position, the artist orchestrates public projects that explore the sociology and ecology of waste management. Her art asks that people reconsider their disregard and ignorance about garbage and where it ends up, as well as their disrespect of the workers who handle it. She has made art installations from refuse, involved sanitation workers all over the world in public performances, and has reconfigured public places, trash trucks, and other paraphernalia of waste management to stress the taken-for-granted aspects of how waste is disposed (Goldman 1995: 281-282).

In *Touch Sanitation* (1978-79), Ukeles listened to sanitation workers' stories of how they were often treated like garbage. She set out to acknowledge the importance of sanitation work and to "heal" the divide between workers and the public. Over an eleven-month period, wearing the orange uniform of the garbage handler, she shook the hand of every city garbage collector in all the boroughs of New York City. From this action, Ukeles created a body of exhibitions.

Ukeles continues to involve urban working people in public art projects. In 1997 for the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art's (LAMOCA) exhibition "Uncommon Sense," the artist collaborated with students and their teachers, firefighters, street maintenance, and sanitation workers creating *Unburnings*, small individual artworks housed in clear glass jars. According to Ukeles, the city workers "symbolize for me the basic coalition partners we are dependent on to keep the city functioning as our common home; without them, the social contract withers. The kids and teachers are our future" (Ukeles 1997a: 154-155). In order to realize the project, Los Angeles city officials donated 700 hours of labor to the project involving over 300 city workers. Teachers and students from five schools donated over 900 hours of learning time. Ukeles and LAMOCA educators worked closely with

the citizen-artists, and explained the brief history of Pennsylvania Hall, Philadelphia, the conceptual basis of the project.

In 1838, three groups of people—women, abolitionists, and free African Americans—who were unable to rent a gathering place of their own, formed a coalition to build a meeting hall with \$20 contributions from over 2 thousand people in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the building, named Pennsylvania Hall or Freedom Hall, was short lived. A mob gathered as soon as the building opened; windows were broken and people entering were threatened. Within three days, Pennsylvania Hall was burned to the ground. The *Unburnings* project is an attempt to symbolically resurrect this temple of freedom, to undo the burning of a century before. The *Unburnings* took multiple forms. Many were miniature shrines to colleagues and strangers lost in fires, including photographs of the deceased along with personal effects.

Ukeles's initial proposal for SRP couples her ongoing concern with recognizing the contributions of urban working class people with lighting technology and the soothing qualities of urban waterways. When invited for a site visit to SRP, she was struck by the manner in which the urban infrastructure, including bridges spanning the Schuylkill River, shoreline concrete bulkheading, and highways, framed the perimeters of the park creating smaller compartments, or as she explained "bathtubs." In the "New Age" language that informs Ukeles' sensibility, these bathtubs signified a site of redemptive healing oases in the midst of a large city. In order to highlight these bathtubs, Ukeles suggested installing linear lighting that will create illuminated borders framing the tubs. Along with lighting that brings the park to life during the evening, Ukeles intends to honor the working people of the Schuylkill River, both past and present, who were employed by the factories that once lined its shores, as well as those who continue to work nearby, such as postal employees of the 30th Street post office, located near the Market Street bridge. She proposes that each linear lighting unit memorialize a worker with a name engraved on railings that will parallel the illuminated borders of the park. The artist explains that funders for this public art project will be able to sponsor workers, paying for sections of the illuminated border/engraved railing. This will create a more "personalized" funding opportunity (Ukeles 1997b; Courtney 1999).

However, Ukeles' proposal for the lighting project has been put on hold indefinitely. This was the result of both Ukeles' lack of a clear implementation strategy and the wish of former Mayor Ed Rendell to have a fully realized lighting project installed on bridges spanning the Schuylkill River for Philadelphia's Millennium celebration. The city hired lighting designer, Ray Grenald, who basically usurped the general plan of Ukeles, and met Rendell's wish by implementing the project by the proposed deadline. According to Julie Courtney, while well intentioned and obviously ambitious, Ukeles preliminary proposal was difficult to facilitate. The artist, as of summer 1999, still had not submitted a clearly defined plan for the project. The technical aspects of a large-scale lighting project are daunting and Ukeles is not experienced in lighting design. As a result, the artist became mired in the preliminary stages of the project and the difficulty of obtaining the funds necessary to realize the project (Courtney 1999). Public art is often the victim of its own hubris: large scale, technically complicated, outdoor art is very expensive and difficult to engineer—and equally difficult to maintain in the long run. The public art of the past, while often monumental, was fabricated from materials intended to last many years. Contemporary public art and the array of materials and technologies from which it is assembled can prove problematic over the long run. This is why projects take years to be realized and so often must be compromised. However, as the power of politicians testifies in the case of Rendell's demand for the Grenald project, ambitious projects can be quickly come into fruition if there exists strong political will.

Since the lighting project was no longer feasible, Ukeles proposed another project for SRP just recently (July 2000). This second proposal also hinges on the significance of the Schuylkill River, this time taking into consideration that a location along the river was once used as a baptismal site during the middle 18th century. Ukeles proposes the construction of an open shelter that celebrates water rituals of the diverse cultures of contemporary Philadelphia, in the northern section of SRP, where Cherry Streets intersects with the river. The project will be sited in an open area that the SRP designers are calling the Cherry Street plaza. The roof of the structure will be similar to a trellis and at key points in the trellis, colored lenses will be installed. The sun beaming through the trellis roof will create a dappled light effect on the ground, mimicking the sparkle of water. Ukeles intends to work with an astrophysicist to plot the points on the trellis in which to install the colored lenses—the idea is

to underscore sixteen different points in the sun's passage across the site each day. On the floor below the trellis, the artist will engrave an image of the 18th century baptismal site once located on the eastern bank of the Schuylkill River. In an effort to involve communities in the process of realizing the project, Ukeles will work with representatives from various cultures in Philadelphia who enact water purification rituals and translate the rituals into images. These images will be etched onto the pylons which support the roof /trellis of the structure. According to Ukeles, the pylons, etched with images of ritual, "represent the diversity of the city, linking the 1740 baptismal site with current-day practices of water rituals" (Ukeles 2000). Ukeles believes that the shelter, as a site of ritual celebration, should not dominate the space, since a significant conceptual component of the project is based on ecology. Ukeles explains: "The river needs attention. The point of the art is to illicit dialogue across time, from the river and the sun, and between peoples—to connect and to heal both ourselves and the river which we have neglected for so long" (Ukeles 2000). Surrounding the image on the floor of the shelter will be two questions that highlight the dialectic between ritualistic purification and the ecological imperative of purifying the river: "Can you imagine immersing yourself in this river to purify/renew yourself?" and "Can you imagine purifying this river so it could purify/renew you?" (Ukeles 2000).

Stacy Levy and Winifred Lutz

Stacy Levy and Winifred Lutz are Philadelphia-area artists known for site-specific projects. Both artists are sensitive to the historical, cultural, and natural elements that converge to form the particularities of place. Levy's approach is often scientifically informed, while Lutz chooses a more poetic, almost Zen attitude in creating her site-integrated art, which are reminiscent of garden landscapes. While their methodologies and conceptual frameworks differ in many respects, they are mutually interested in revealing taken-for-granted aspects of places.

Levy's background in sculpture, forestry, environmental science, landscape architecture, and landscape restoration preclude naïve understandings of nature: she neither mythologizes nor claims a mastery over the natural world. Her multidisciplinary approach to artmaking, as Penny Bach has argued, makes her an artist for the twenty-first century (Bach 1996b). Levy's artistic approach dispenses with boundaries that often constrict our thinking about the interrelationship of art, science, and life. A critical aim of Levy's work is to make the "hidden visible" (Seidel 1993). By investigating

phenomena that seem commonplace, like drinking water, or phenomena that we simply do not have the ability to see, such as wind direction, Levy heightens our awareness of nature.

Nature, as Levy is keenly aware, is never isolated from culture, and more often than not, is used as a resource for specific human ends. *Hidden River* (1990) reveals what we often take for granted—the circulatory system which provides us with our tap water. While Schuylkill means “hidden river” in Dutch, it also signifies the pipes which run through our houses and carry water to our taps and toilets. In this installation, four sinks placed at graduating levels on the wall and are connected by pipes—reminiscent of the Schuylkill River’s sinuous course. Each sink represents a particular Pennsylvania city that receives its water supply from the Schuylkill, and the height of each sink represents the elevation of the respective cities. Since each upstream sink’s drainpipe is connected to the tap of each downstream sink, Levy suggests that our drinking water is essentially wastewater, reminding us that our most precious resource is recycled. Thus, Levy has prior knowledge of the Schuylkill River which made her an appropriate choice for SRP’s public art project.

Levy’s art sometimes highlights phenomena from natural and cultural history that have been eradicated by human impact. In *Forty Seven Feet into the Woods* (1991), Levy examined the natural and cultural history of a wooded site using sighting and hearing “cones” to focus on different aspects of the surrounding forests, as well as explanatory statements etched into glass. One statement reminds the viewer of the once vibrant Native American presence in the area: “Once This Was An Indian Trail.” The indoor installation *Watercourse* (1996), not only documented the waterways of the Delaware Valley through the clever medium of plastic cups filled with water from those very rivers, streams, and creeks, but also memorialized those waterways lost to diversion and settlement.

Urban Oldfield: Diagram of a Vacant Lot (1998), a site-specific installation for the Institute of Contemporary Art’s (ICA) first floor gallery asks the question: If the ICA had not been built, what would be growing on this urban block? Levy answered the question by creating a full-scale diagram of a vacant lot depicting the growth patterns of vegetation that might reclaim such an urban site. A walking path meandered through the space, while more than eight thousand stems of steel, topped with mylar, leather, and vinyl elements that represent various plant species, prickled up from the floor. An audio component provided a soundtrack for the installation, blending the sounds of the city with the

sounds of nature. This indoor field of unnatural materials gave a sense of the complex mosaic of plant life that thrives in what we perceive as inhospitable conditions (Baker 1998a: 8).

Like Levy, Winifred Lutz uses an investigative approach in order to underscore particular aspects of sites, but Lutz is more romantic than didactic. In *A Reclamation Garden*, a slowly evolving work begun in 1992 at the Abington Art Center's Sculpture Garden, the artist reshapes, frames, and comments on the existing natural features of a wooded area forty-five minutes from Philadelphia. Lutz wanted to create a sense of place in a woodland that at first glance appears totally "natural" but actually has been impacted by cultural forces at least since the 18th century, when it was landscaped as a garden. The site has remained untouched since the 1930s. The installation blurs the boundary between nature and artistic intervention. *A Reclamation Garden* is a contemporary version of a French or English 18th century folly garden, but instead of referencing antiquity through artificial ruins, Lutz pays homage to natural events of the past. The titles of the works in the installation refer to what Lutz calls registers, marking the work of gravity, time, and weather: "The Deadfall Dome," "The Red Oak Portal," "The Impact Zone." Only Lutz's fifteen-foot-tall stone tower, which carries on a dialogue with a preexisting stone gateway, is recognizable as human-made (Lutz 1993).

Lutz's artistic methodology, one she utilizes for most of her installations, involves walking, exploring, and "being" in space, as well as researching the cultural and natural history of sites. Lutz follows a Zen-like approach in which she repeats the same tasks many times; the tasks include gathering, sorting, framing, and documenting different natural features. *A Reclamation Garden*, and other works, are based on these routine activities rather than a predetermined aesthetic vision for it is Lutz's intention to collaborate with, rather than dominate a given situation (Lutz 1993).

For *A Reclamation Garden*, the first activity involved clearing the entry area to the site of fallen trees and trash, and removing some of the non-indigenous trees. These materials were gathered and sorted to create a record of the ongoing processes of age, decay, and renewal. The artist's hand is most easily seen in the framing activities—the creation of viewfinders which highlight the natural diversity of the site. Wisteria vines, for instance, were disentangled from two old trees and retrained to form a double arched portal between them. A large fallen black walnut tree was trimmed to the main trunk and a collection of different deadfall logs were used as posts to support the extended log. The

work exists not only as an object of beauty, but as an indicator of the rate of decay among different kinds of wood. Making the visitor ponder whether what exists before them is part of nature or was created by the artist is critical to the viewing experience. A round pile of twigs, low stacks of branches, a smooth stone placed flush with the ground and sandblasted with an inscription more or less announce themselves as “art;” but it also turns out that a sandy channel that carries drainpipe runoff from a parking lot is art as well. Lutz spent a year investigating drainage and formed the channel in accordance with existing patterns (Lutz 1993; Griswold 1997: B45).

Lutz has also created gardens in more urban settings. Adjacent to the Mattress Factory, a contemporary art museum in a Pittsburgh working class neighborhood, Lutz excavated the remains of an old factory building and made a garden installation among the ruins. For this untitled installation, the artist began by excavating the site using handtools as well as hiring a backhoe. She eventually discovered the foundation of a building. Local sources attributed the remains to an old paper factory, which burned to the ground in the early 1960s, but further research revealed that before its last incarnation, it was first a macaroni factory, then a candy company. The industrial site in its myriad guises must have been an important economic hub for local Italian-American residents. Lutz used the architectural remains of the site, including the brick-filled basement, concrete slabs with reinforcing metal barbs, and a cistern to create the installation. Bricks were excavated and reused to make a wall with a large window—a reminder of the building that was once there. The window also serves as a kind of viewfinder, framing a particular view of the garden for the observer. Old rebar, twisting and jutting from concrete, has been cleverly formed into stair railings by the artist so the visitor can descend safely into the open-air basement. A cistern found on site now sits in the basement and receives water from a salvaged concrete gutter, that now bisects the garden. Hidden in one of the brick boundary walls is the water source that feeds the gutter. The sound of water flowing is intended to be soothing and intensify the privacy of being among the ruins; the water-filled cistern in the basement is meant to cool the space (Lutz 1997).

The plantings in the garden reflect the field ecology of western Pennsylvania—the indigenous trees, shrubs, vines, and grasses are what might be found in a field in transition. In what Lutz informally calls “The Private Prairie,” the artist has permanently anchored a chair to what was once a

cement slab making up part of the first floor, and has removed small sections of the floor on either side of the chair. In the two vacant spaces, she has planted field grass which eventually envelopes most of the chair thereby creating a prairie experience for the participant in an urban setting (Lutz 1997).

For SRP, Levy and Lutz propose a large, site-specific work, situated on the eastern bank of the Schuylkill River, near the Walnut Street bridge, that accentuates the tidal changes of the river, entitled *Confluences: The Flows of the Schuylkill* (see figure 5). The project allows for river water to enter a terraced basin—the site of the proposed project is a small “beach” where the concrete bulkheading had been left open, at the request of the Delta Group, to accentuate the tide of the river. At high tide, the basin is filled to the brim; at low tide, the basin is completely empty and the terraced concrete walls serve as public seating. On each side of the opening, the artists will erect ruins of bygone buildings, created with bricks excavated from the banks of the once industrially viable river. The Schuylkill River is formed by the gathering of water from various sources: rainfall, upstream tributaries, storm-water runoff from the city’s streets and bridges, and the tidal ebb and flow of the Delaware River. This project aims to focus on and demonstrate the different flows that are essential to the river: the daily events of tidal change, the seasonal fluctuation of the river’s water level, the river’s response to obstacles in its path, the shaping of the banks, the water runoff from the bridge above, and all the nuances of the river’s unceasing movement. The project consists of four interrelated sections: the tidal basin, a hydrology pattern terrace, the storm-water catchbasins and drainage runnels (which “catch” rainwater runoff from the bridge above and channel it into the tidal pool), and the marshy lowlands that line the river’s banks (Baker 1998b: 28).

When I asked the artists to explain who contributed what aspect to the proposal, they did not want to elaborate stating that due to the nature of collaboration, it is difficult to separate where each artist entered into the project. “We have to come up with a name for the third person who both of us have become” (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000).

While Levy and Lutz do not use the community participation process in the manner in which Ukeles proposes, their project is certainly *not* a disembodied object with little regard for the complexities of its location. Levy and Lutz offer an audience a new intimacy with the river—a river that is constrained by urban Philadelphia. “It is crossed by bridges, surrounded by concrete, channeled

by bulkheads, sunken below our view, but is still a natural body of water coursing through the city” (Levy and Lutz 1996). When I asked the artists about who they see as the community, they answered by stating that their community is the river itself, “in the sense of having an ongoing collaboration with it” (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000). According to Lutz, their attempts to highlight taken for granted aspects of the river will forge communities who are interested in engaging with the river. For example, teachers from the two elementary schools nearby might use the project as a way to teach children about ecology, the river, and aspects of its movement. However, Levy and Lutz propose that their project, as a permanent public artwork, will be subject to many audiences over time. In order for it to be relevant in the long run, they must provide, in the work, a certain timelessness. They explain this idea:

Over time, a public work will have many audiences. Its continued relevance is always unpredictable. Yet some things endure. We find this goal of lasting value most possible through a certain quietness and consciousness of time in landscape that is characteristic of gardens. In the garden paradigm, the organization of the place provides an interlude for people to sense where they are and to appreciate the layers of life and forces around them. It is possible in a carefully orchestrated site to direct attention to the qualities inherent in a place. This used to be called evoking the *genius loci* or the genius of the place (Levy and Lutz 1996).

Confluences is not a city booster’s celebration of the Schuylkill River, but an ecologically and artistically sophisticated investigation that takes into consideration the myriad factors that create a river, including industrial history and polluted runoff from contemporary urban streets.

Groundbreaking for this project has yet to begin due to the geologic pace that governs public art projects and that funding has yet to be fully secured (estimated cost is approximately \$500 thousand). The finalization of design and the changes that must be implemented and approved by various agencies is a long, involved process. As mentioned previously, several alterations to the plan have already taken place on the suggestion of the Fairmount Park Commission, including the addition of fencing, the eradication of access stairs, and the possible eradication of the storm water runoff runnels that lead to the tidal basin, which are perceived as safety hazards for pedestrians when this water freezes. The artists must still conduct their test to determine how “dirty” the basin might become during the tidal process and how much debris collects in the basin—then they must schedule and present their findings to the Fairmount Park Commission. Furthermore, they must prove to the Department of Environmental Protection that the construction process will not deposit an overabundance of sediment into the river.

The Army Corps of Engineers must conduct core sampling on the shore site to make sure that the landfill on which the project will eventually rest will not eminently collapse. “We are hoping that the collapse has already occurred so that money will not have to be spent on reinforcing the soil” (Lutz in Levy and Lutz 2000). The Urban Water Action Group must investigate the site and determine whether the project infringes on wetlands; however, the site area is so small that this will not likely delay the project. The construction documents must still be drafted and all permits to begin construction must still be secured. According to the artists, groundbreaking may begin next year, but according to Stacy Levy, “if it gets built within the next decade we will be happy” (Levy in Levy and Lutz 2000).

In this chapter, I have examined the public art process for SRP by using my role on the advisory committee as point of entry for ethnographic investigation. It reveals a process that is often hidden from public scrutiny, despite its ramifications in public urban space, by underscoring how art “gets” where it is—the journey before the destination. While this is an important investigation, it is also the only mode of inquiry available to me at this time, as the art has yet to be installed in SRP. Howard Becker’s definition of art worlds as collective activity adds further clarity to my ethnography of the SRP public art process. Using Howard Becker’s art world model as well as my own ethnographic experience, I outline the different perspectives of those involved in the process and, leading from my own point of view as an anthropologist in training and as one familiar with the terrain of public art, takes to task the SRP public art process for its underexploration of community, both in the public art process itself and in inadequately informing local residents regarding developments of the public art plan for SRP. However, as previously indicated, community members who do not support the grand development scenario of SRP and resented the fact that they were not notified about the public art process, still support the public art projects in the park. How can this be? Tentative answers lie within both the public art proposals themselves, as exemplified in the previous sections, as well as the contradictory nature of the social production of space.

As both Craig Owes and Rosalyn Deutsche have suggested in Chapter 3, artistic production, reception, and interpretation are always contested and the public sphere is heterogeneous and fluid, never monolithic and static. If any site has the potential to be a public or private space, then public art has the potential to engage critically the social production of space. Thus, space, with its myriad social

actors, always contains alternative scenarios. Despite the fact that public art reflects the interests of those in control of development projects and may be implemented in the name of exclusionary space, public art also reflects the artist's vision and begs interpretation on the part of the viewer, whether or not s/he was involved in the selection process. Moreover, to claim that development firms are monoliths of corporate greed, mere conspirators with Disney, leaves no room for other possibilities. Thus, in spite of the shortcomings of SRP's public art and development process, in which local residents have been largely ignored, and the flaws inherent in the landscape of consumption model on which SRP is partially predicated, the public art projects proposed by the winners of the public art competition remain interesting and even hopeful, as I related in the final section of this chapter.