

THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT.

NEWSPAPER



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"A periodical, like a newspaper, a book, or any other medium of didactic expression that is aimed at a certain level of the reading or listening public, cannot satisfy everyone equally; not everyone will find it useful to the same degree. The important thing is that it serve as a stimulus for everyone; after all, no publication can replace the thinking mind."
Antonio Gramsci
(Prison Notebook 8)



August 3rd, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

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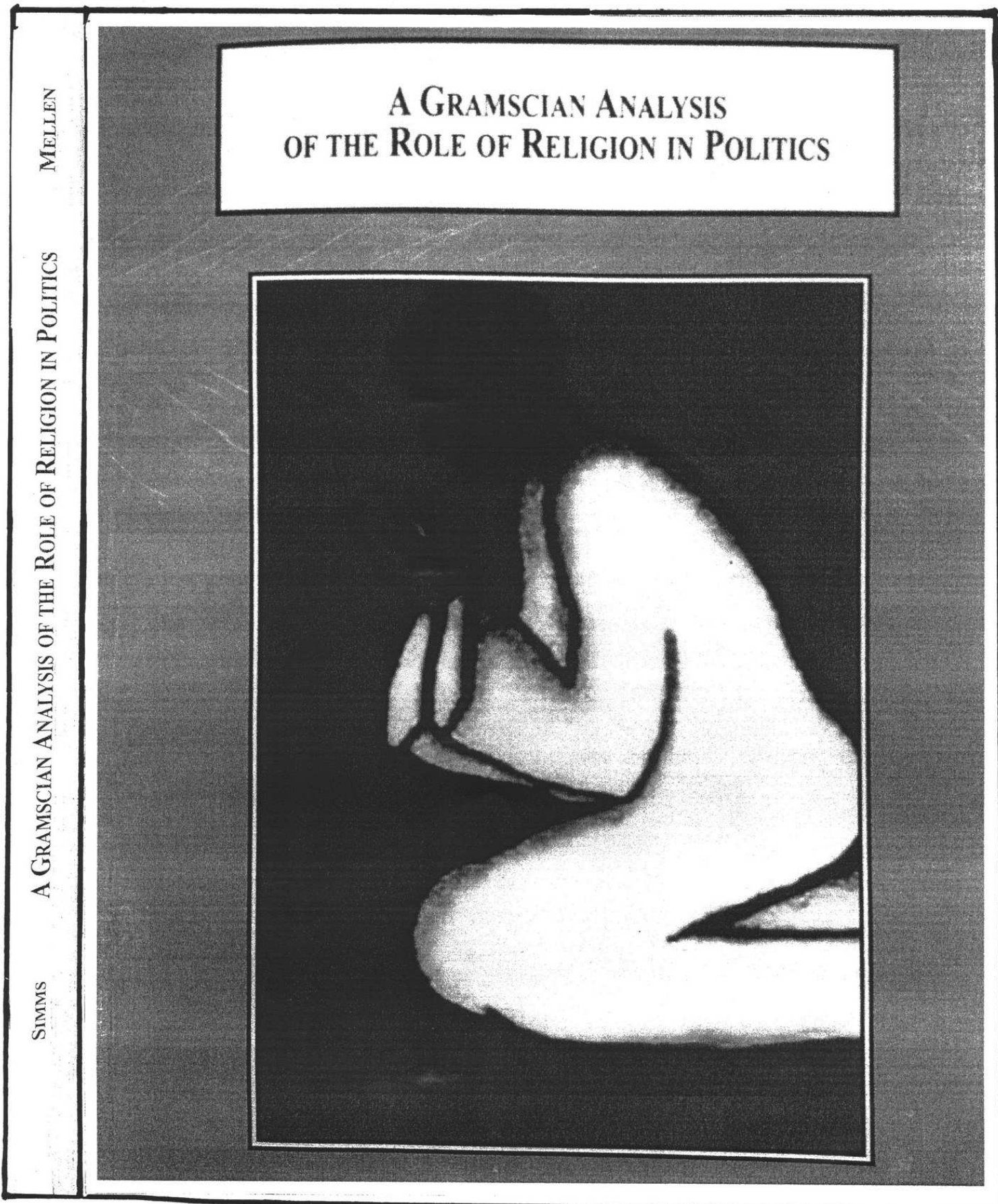


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Bronx, NY 10456

Saturday

Thunderstorm



82 °F | °C

Precipitation: 40%

Humidity: 60%

Wind: 10 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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12 AM 3 AM 6 AM 9 AM 12 PM 3 PM 6 PM 9 PM

Fri Sat Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri



82° 77° 82° 77° 81° 62° 81° 62° 81° 60° 81° 72° 81° 60° 80° 60°

EXCERPT FROM A GRAMSCIAN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN POLITICS BY

DR. RUPE SIMMS

CHAPTER ONE

ANTONIO GRAMSCI: THE MAN, HIS POLITICS, AND HIS CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

Antonio Gramsci's reputation among the preeminent neo-Marxist scholars is immense. Christopher Hill eulogizes him, stating, he "may well be regarded as the greatest Marxist thinker since Lenin; certainly the greatest in Western Europe." Perhaps Gramsci's most remarkable contribution to Marxist theory lay in his challenge to the notion that politics is coercive by nature and in his dedication to the position that ideological instruction is essential to revolution. The following discussion amplifies these two foundational elements of Gramscian theory by offering a sketch of his biography followed by an overview of the most salient points of his philosophy, giving special attention to his sociology of religion.

The Life and Ideological Production of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

Gramsci was born at Ales on the island of Sardinia in 1891 as the fourth of seven children. During his early years, he was evidently influenced by the fact that Sardinia, his homeland, endured successive periods of colonialism under the domination of the Italian mainlanders. This made for a stressful youth--schooling was almost impossible and survival was always challenging. His father's arrest and the consequent loss of the family's primary source of income was one of the many misfortunes he endured as a young man. However, at the same time, he witnessed the realities of local political life: strikes and disorganized peasant

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was a long historical process, and he argued that a politically conscious working class was the foundation for the society of the future.

However, during the ascendancy of Mussolini (1883-1945), the Prime Minister of Italy between 1922 and 1943, the Fascists, who established themselves in Italy in 1922, grew progressively stronger, stabilizing their domination by passing repressive laws and mandating the liquidation of all other political parties. Gramsci, a deputy of the Italian Parliament in 1924, was arrested as an enemy of the state in 1926 and sentenced to a twenty-year prison term. He spent the balance of his life under miserable conditions writing his *Quaderni del Carcere* (Prison Notebooks) from a cell between 1929 and 1935. Finally, he died on April 27, 1937, from inadequate medical attention just five days after receiving an official pardon.

The Contribution of Gramsci to Marxism

As Gramsci matured as a socialist and observed the political developments of his day, he theorized that a Marxist strategy of revolution had to emphasize a subjective dynamic, a dynamic that traditional Marxism tended to minimize. According to Marx, economic factors are the driving forces of history; however, Gramsci argued that no revolution could be successful without maximizing the importance of culture, collective will, and voluntary cooperation. Gramsci never denied the essentiality of economics, but for him the notion that structure (economic base) determines the superstructure (ideas, religion, philosophy, and so on) was false: he insisted that a mutual relationship exists between the two.

Furthermore, at the point of class conflict, which Gramsci called "crisis in authority" and described as a situation in which "the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer 'leading' but only 'dominant,' exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously.

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revolts characterized Sardinian resistance, while local socialist intellectuals preached the need for working class solidarity. In reviewing the sociopolitical strife on the island during these years, Fiori describes the oppressed underclass as "stubborn individualists, reluctant to group together, even in self-defense, and too inclined to put up with what was bad for fear of something worse--like losing one's job. Their natural reaction to such resigned suffering was the riot, rather than any kind of disciplined patient struggle."¹⁸

In 1911, as a young man of twenty-one, Gramsci traveled to the city of Turni on the mainland. There he broadened his intellectual interests, especially in the area of social theory, by gaining access to communist literature through his elder brother, Gennaro, an outspoken socialist. This early period foreshadowed his socialistic bent, revolutionary character, and peasant sympathies--salient points in the theory he developed later during years of incarceration.

While in Italy, Gramsci won a scholarship from Carlo Alberto College at the University of Turin. However, although he was at first a serious student, he later became increasingly involved in national politics, and this distracted him from his studies. After a time, he discontinued school and in 1914 joined the Turin section of the PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano) to become a full-time political activist and professional revolutionary. During this period, Gramsci developed an appreciation for the almost limitless influence of intellectuals on politics through their ability to shape culture.

Later, as an avowed socialist, frequently contributing to newspapers and journals and forcefully debating his political opponents, Gramsci rose to the leadership of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) after serving as one of its founding members in 1921. As a dedicated theorist on the vanguard of the Communist movement, he published voluminously, contributing to the interpretation of history, philosophy, sociology, language, and literature from a Marxist standpoint. Throughout his career, he insisted that educating the masses

¹⁸ Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* (London: New Left Books, 1970), 34-35.

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...¹⁹ In such a crisis, superstructural issues over-influence (but do not dictate) structural factors. Thus, the foremost issue was not the objective realities precipitating crisis, but instead the subjective, human response to them.

For Gramsci, history confirmed this observation as revealed in his comments on the Bolshevik Revolution. Here he departs from traditional Marxism with its emphasis on reductionism and economic determinism, stating:

This thought [Bolshevik ideology] sees as the dominant factor in history, not raw economic facts, but man, men in societies, men in relation to one another, reaching agreements with one another, developing through these contacts (civilization) a collective, social will; men coming to understand economic facts, judging them and adapting them to their will until this becomes the driving force of the economy and moulds objective reality, which lives and moves and comes to resemble a current of volcanic lava that can be channeled wherever and in whatever way men's will determines.²⁰

Gramsci witnessed that in Turin in 1920, owing to the organization and collective effort of the working class, the capitalist system was on the verge of collapse. Mass strikes and open conflict made a proletariat takeover seem imminent; however, the movement crumbled. The revolutionaries were ideologically unprepared for victory. According to Gramsci, they had accepted the oppressive worldview of the ruling class and were without a critical imperative--a "cultural education." Fiori relates this idea to Gramsci's expansion of Marx:

Gramsci's originality as a Marxist lay . . . in his argument that the systems' real strength does not lie in the violence of the ruling class or the coercive power of its state apparatus, but in the acceptance by the ruled of a conception of the world which belongs to the rulers. The philosophy of the ruling class passes through a whole tissue of complex vulgarizations to emerge as common sense: that is, the philosophy of the masses, who accept the morality, the customs, the institutionalized rules of behavior of the society they live in.²¹

¹⁹ Quintin Hoare, ed., *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)* (New York: International Publishers, 1977), 274-75.

²⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

Similarly, Gramsci noted that, in spite of his efforts to teach the "revolutionary class" political consciousness, it supported Mussolini's fascist takeover and thereby deprived itself of democratic freedoms. In prison he pondered this contradiction and determined that revolutions are destined to fail if they depend solely on the inexorable laws of capitalism, as Marx had theorized.²² Thus, a socialist defeat of elite domination must be founded upon a revolutionary mass consciousness, accentuating the ideological and cultural dimensions of class and political struggle. Gramsci clarifies this point using the French Revolution as an illustration:

Every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas amongst masses of men who are at first resistant, and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves, who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition. The latest example . . . is that of the French Revolution. . . . The Enlightenment was a magnificent revolution in itself and . . . it gave all Europe a bourgeois . . . unified consciousness, one which was sensitive to all the woes and misfortunes of the common people and which was the best possible preparation for the bloody revolt that followed in France.²³

He continues this line of thought stating, "The bayonets of Napoleon's armies found their road already smoothed by an invisible army of books and pamphlets that had swarmed out of Paris from the first half of the eighteenth century and had prepared both men and institutions for the necessary renewal."²⁴

This idea relates very directly to Gramsci moving away from Marx's "economicism" and arguing that multiple factors created what he referred to as a "historical bloc" (unity of structure and superstructure).²⁵ As stated above, Marx believed that economic forces (structure) determined society's culture and ideas (superstructure). However, Gramsci theorized that interdependent elements of the

²² Carl Boggs, *The Two Revolutions: Gramsci and the Dilemmas of Western Marxism* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 153-54.

²³ Hoare, *Political Writings (1910-1920)* (1977), 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Quintin Hoare, *Selections from the Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 137.

inspire the great factory councils' movement in Turin (1919-1920), which sought to politically educate the working masses on a grand scale, and he later pursued this same objective as general secretary of the Italian Communist Party (1924-26). However, in spite of his effort to politicize the common laborers, whom he viewed as the "revolutionary class," with the coming of Mussolini, they supported Italian Fascism and capitalism, as mentioned above, and systematically limited their democratic freedoms. They willingly consented to their own domination. Gramsci sought to explain this phenomenon. During his years of incarceration (1929-1937), he theorized about the role of ideas and cultural values, that is, hegemony, in soliciting voluntarily consent to exploitation. The following discussion examines hegemony, emphasizing its essence and counter-hegemony highlighting its application and ultimate objective.

The Essence of Hegemony and Counter-hegemony

Hegemony is a type of leadership in which one class exercises authority over another through the control of culture; the ruling elite do not employ violence or coercion (via the criminal law enforced by a police force and military) to secure domination. They rely instead on a popularly accepted worldview to gain the willful cooperation of the subaltern group.

According to Gramsci, people are governed by ideas, which reify the economic interests of the dominant order; they are not governed by force alone.²⁸ The hegemonic apparatus defines popular consciousness so effectively that it dominates the values, traditions, lifestyles, and cultural orientations of the majority of society. Thus, hegemonic ideas become an intractable component of common sense or what Gramsci calls, "the traditional popular conception of the world."²⁹ Within this social framework, the economic elite diffuse a set of ruling ideas throughout society in order to control the thinking and life experience of the

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

structure and superstructure united to form a single way of life, that is, to form a given set of attitudes, worldviews, and systems of morality--the "historical bloc." This observation expanded Marx's analysis. It exposed the ruling order and its oppressive ideology as an enormous multi-layered system of domination that the exploited masses accepted uncritically as "common sense" (or what Gramsci also calls the "philosophy of non-philosophy"²⁶). He explains this concept, stating that the "most fundamental characteristic [of "common sense"] is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is."²⁷ Gramsci's notion of the historical bloc and its internalization as a "non-philosophy" helps explain what he viewed as the durability and almost irresistible authority of the dominant order.

In sum, to the Italian theorist traditional Marxism had unacceptably reduced culture to a direct reflection of economic forces. Gramsci repudiated this position arguing that it was simplistic and mechanistic and insisted instead that culture is semiautonomous and dramatically influential in shaping all aspects of social, economic, and political life. Thus, his preeminent contribution to Marxian thought resides in his non-deterministic interpretation of the relationship of structure to superstructure and in his introduction of consciousness, will, and consent as elements of critical importance to the analysis of power and domination.

The Social Theory of Gramsci

The notion of hegemony is the requisite starting-point for an overview of Gramsci's sociological thought. In his early writings, Gramsci consistently emphasized the importance of politicizing the "revolutionary class," and thereby preparing its members to participate in political life in light of their specific class interests. As editor of the journal *L'Ordine Nuovo* ("The New Order"), he helped

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

masses and to facilitate their domination. They create an exploitative political arrangement that is internalized by the working class and constantly reinforced in churches, schools, the media, and popular culture at large. Thus, hegemony is instrumental, instrumental in the sense that it employs the intellectual, moral, and philosophical elements of culture to accomplish economic, political, and social exploitation.

Gramsci refers to society at large as the "integral state" and divides it into "two major superstructural levels."³⁰ He identifies "civil society," composed of schools, clubs, political parties, religious institutions, the media, and "the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private,'" and he cites "political society," made up of the government, courts, the army, police, and in essence "the State."³¹ Because the elite control "civil society," they are able to propagate universally an ideological paradigm that supports their leadership and that the masses internalize uncritically and adopt as the natural order of their world. Gramsci clarifies this point, stating, "The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant groups enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production."³²

If the exploited masses challenge this hegemonic domination, the "political society," through the threat or legitimate use of violence, forces cooperation with the elite agenda. Gramsci states that in such a crisis the "traditional ruling class . . . retains power, reinforces it for the time being, and uses it to crush its adversary and dispense his leading cadres, who cannot be very numerous or highly trained."³³ Consequently, the dominant order solidifies its ascendancy through both persuasion ("civil society") and coercion ("political

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

society") which Gramsci summarizes as "force and . . . consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization."³⁴

At the same time, Gramsci explains that the separation of society into civil and political spheres is purely methodological: in point of fact, both elements collusively produce an ensemble of sociopolitical relations that concretize domination and constitute the ruling order.³⁵ Indeed, "civil society" and "political society" are complementary: the hegemony produced in the private sphere is backed by the physical force of the State, and the physical force of the State is justified by the ideas and values of the private sphere.

Of course, Gramsci was aware that the activities of the State go far beyond mere coercion, and that the State mechanisms are profoundly instrumental in the production of consent and the education of the masses.

At this juncture, the concept of counter-hegemony as an anti-ruling class cultural force becomes critical, for through it, according to Gramsci, ideological revolutionaries are able to challenge and overthrow capitalism and substitute a socialist State. To accomplish this, the workers must develop subversive institutions of their own through which they actively oppose the Bourgeois regime and gradually displace it through counter-cultural strategies, rather than violence.³⁶ To Gramsci, a bloody revolution against modern Western democracies was bound to fail; such simplistic strategies of social change would certainly be crushed by the complex self-protective institutions (police, armed military, and civil society) of today's capitalist governments.³⁷

Instead, the subaltern group must create an anti-ruling class vision and alternative sites of culture production that will inspire and teach the masses to secure a political space of their own, a space from which they will create "the dictatorship of the proletariat."³⁸ Gramsci envisioned a protracted ideological

³⁴ Ibid., 170.

³⁵ Ibid., 160.

³⁶ Hoare, *Political Writings* (1977), 65.

³⁷ Hoare, *Selections from the Notebooks* (1971), 238.

³⁸ Hoare, *Political Writings* (1977), 65.

struggle in which traditional intellectuals, as proponents of hegemonic thought, and organic intellectuals, as advocates of counter-hegemonic philosophy, would compete for ascendance. He viewed this struggle as a "war of position" characterized by an extended political contention within "civil society" and not involving a "war of manoeuvre," that is, a brief period of intense conflict designed to gain control of the State by force.³⁹ To conceptualize this strife, Gramsci produced a complex sociology having cultural hegemony and counter-hegemony at its core.

The Creation of Hegemony and Counter-hegemony

Throughout the prison writings, Gramsci presents intellectuals as integral to all aspects of the politics of class. For instance, in discussing their influence on social organization and economic production, he states, "[e]very social group . . . creates . . . one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields."⁴⁰ Gramsci further elaborates the contribution of intellectuals to the theoretical dimension of class organization, arguing, "A human mass does not 'distinguish' itself . . . without . . . organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders . . . without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people 'specialised' in the conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas."⁴¹

In Gramsci's view, these intellectuals are not necessarily people associated with the academy, but rather they are the conscious and unconscious prime movers of organizations dedicated to the creation of ideas with sociopolitical ends. They are the teachers, politicians, preachers, scientists, and journalists who form society's norms, values, and beliefs, and who originate the worldview of the

³⁹ Hoare, *Selections from the Notebooks* (1971), 108-10, 120, 229-35, 237-39.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁴¹ Ibid., 334.

population at large.⁴² Gramsci, therefore, expands the conventional notion of intellectuals to include everyone that produces and popularizes ideas in society as a whole, both in its "civil" and "political" spheres.⁴³ Within this broad framework, Gramsci sub-divides intellectuals into two basic categories: "traditional" and "organic."

The Hegemonic Ideology of Traditional Intellectuals

Traditional intellectuals create and authenticate the cultural leadership of the ruling class, the class with which they identify and by which they are rewarded. Through their influence in both "civil" and "political society," they, as editors, politicians, and such, disseminate hegemonic ideas that solicit consent from the oppressed to the conditions of their subordination and that justify ruling class domination. The power elite promote these intellectuals to stations of authority and respect, positioning them to garner "spontaneous consent" from the masses to the dominant ideology that they produce.⁴⁴ Such intellectuals create a hegemonic worldview that indoctrinates the exploited group with rules of acceptable philosophy and moral behavior that are equivalent to, in Gramsci's words, "a religion taken . . . in the secular sense of a unity of faith between a conception of the world and a corresponding norm of conduct."⁴⁵ Thus, according to Gramsci, as "the dominant group's deputies" and "functionaries," traditional intellectuals exert an enormous influence in a vast system of political manipulation by creating a hegemonic ideology that concretizes ruling class ascendance and legitimates working class oppression.⁴⁶

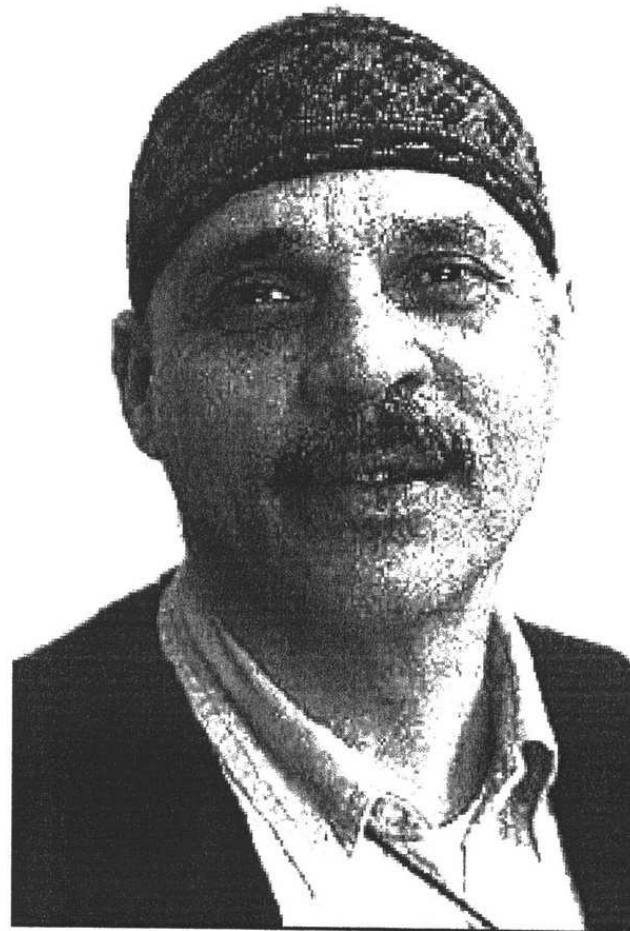
⁴² Ibid., 12.

⁴³ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 326.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 12.



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PROPOSITION OF
LaTASHA NEVADA
DIGGS

Philosophy Hour for Kids
Ages 8 +

- Question:

We sit in a room filled with books. Philosophy, Politics, ideologies, etc.

I am 8 years old

I am 14 years old

I am 25 years old

Why should Gramsci, Marx, Lenin, etc matter to me?

- A Gramsci coloring book
- A comic book
- A graphic novel
- Card game (Concentration)

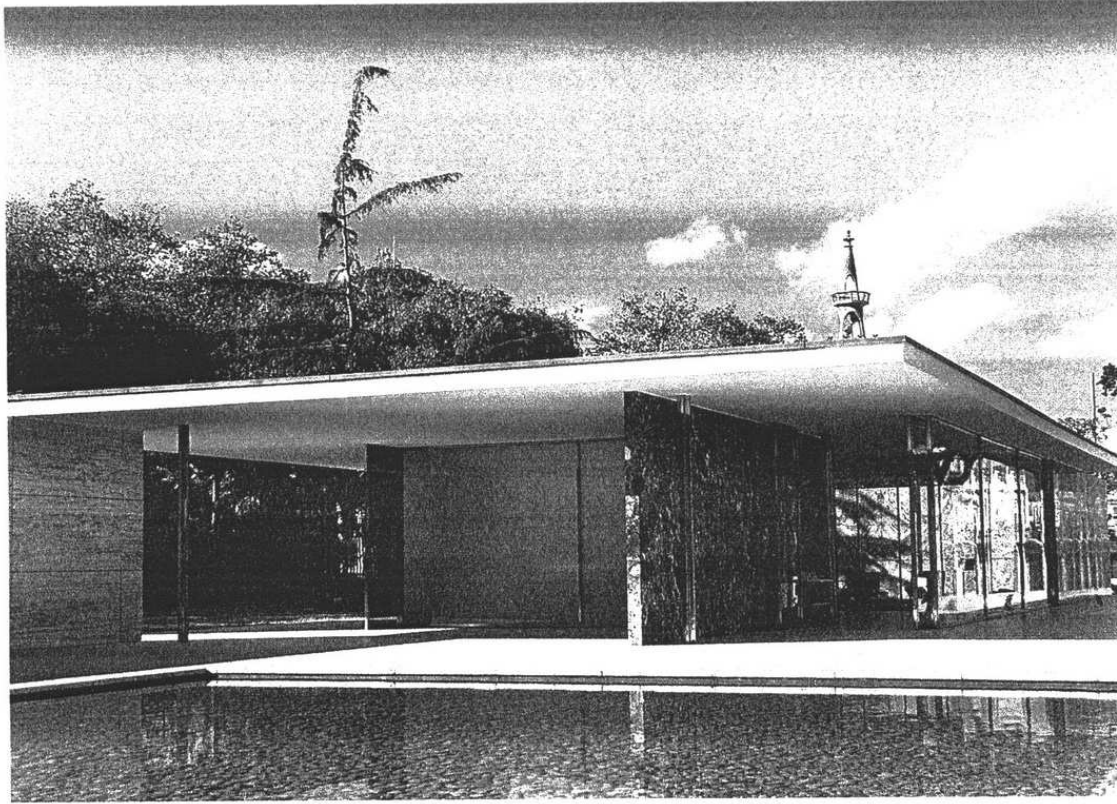
(Proposition of LaTasha Nevada Diggs)

A DAILY LECTURE BY MARCUS STEINWEG

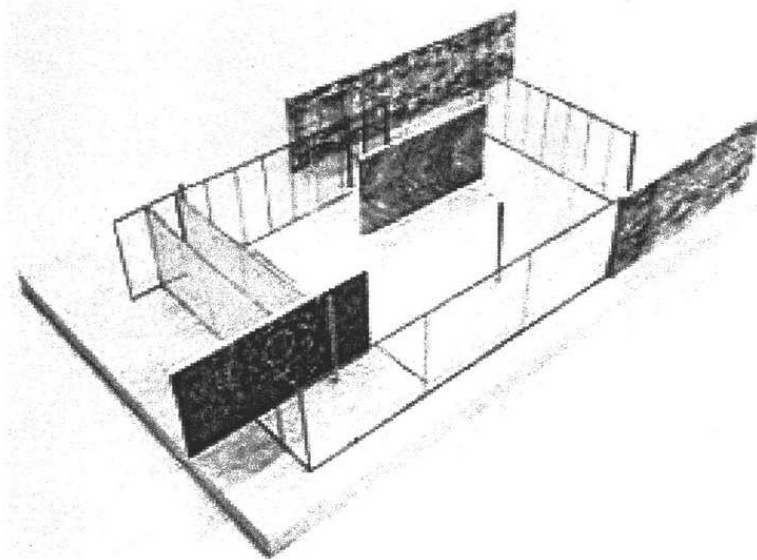
34th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 3rd August 2013
DECONSTRUCTION OF CRITICISM
Marcus Steinweg

1. For art there can be no alliance with the facts, which does not mean, however, that it disputes or misrecognizes their power.
2. But art does not exhaust itself by demonstrating this non-misrecognition through the analytical power which it also has.
3. As long as art does not transgress and transcend its knowing, it is not art.
4. It would be nothing other than a form of self-reassurance of the subject within the web of its critically commentated situation.
5. Only an assertion of form, that evades narcissistic self-reassurance by articulating the fleetingness of factual certainties, succeeds in confronting the universal inconsistency which is the subject's genuine, proper time and its genuine, proper place, for, to be a subject means to transgress the horizon of facts in order to give room to the experience of a primordial tornness, which is the subject's truth, by asserting a new form.
6. I call this tornness the incommensurability of a life which, as the life of a subject, accelerates beyond its representation as a subject in the field of aesthetic, social, political and cultural evidence.
7. The subject does not articulate this distance only subsequently.
8. It *is* nothing other than the distance which it articulates toward the authority of facts.
9. It distances itself from the world of the conceptual and aesthetic codes which suggest to it the illusion of a firm identity, while reducing it to its status as object.
10. Resistance to this reduction means lifting oneself up in view of factual reality, opening up to the turbulence of life in its uncontrolled dimension.
11. That is the dimension of chaos which marks the edge of worldly events, the contingency implicit in them.

AMBASSADOR'S CORNER NOTE # 22 BY YASMIL RAYMOND



A handful of architects have visited the monument over the past weeks and in every instance the conversation spirals down to an awkward apology for architecture's guilty conscious for the failure of urban planning. There is no doubt that a new notion of architecture in relation to civic society is to be thought and pushed along by a courageous generation of architects but as we have experienced recently, the public space retains social and political vitality of what might be needed. Perhaps it is worthwhile to begin by considering the social character of friendship and contrast it to the architecture structure of the "pavilion" or kiosk for an interpretable form and program with palpable civic meaning. A pavilion, more or less a large tent, a wide-open structure that exists in an ambiguous dimension, not a complete building but a cross between a shed and a gazebo. These freestanding structures, which often times lack proper plumbing and running water, and therefore have functional constraints, allow a different manner socializing and interacting beyond ordered and ritualized activities. It is in this confusion that the pavilion holds tight to its role in the invention of a "common space" generated independent from purpose and proper function. The space of the pavilion can be defined as an unspoken agreement on civility, hospitality and affection. (continues on note 23)



48. GRAMSCI TO TOGLIATTI (Vienna, 27 January 1924)

Dear Palmi,

Since the letter you sent me just after leaving prison, I have received nothing more from you.¹⁰¹ I think that you have been shown my two letters, one to Negri and the other to Urbani, in which I expressed at greater length my views on the present situation in the party and on the solutions which I consider appropriate to resolve its problems. I am still waiting for a letter from you that will refute me or say that I am right. Today I want to talk to you about a specific problem which I consider fundamental in the present situation, and which provides me with a touchstone for judging all the party's activity and the methods which have characterized the comrades who have led it up till now: the activity which (so that we may understand one another) I shall call that belonging to comrade Tito.¹⁰²

Two key episodes justify me in asserting that in this field there has existed, and still does exist, a great confusion and lack of organization. Well, if it is theoretically correct to accuse the minority of being, at least partially, liquidatory, because it does not understand and enormously underestimates the importance of this work in the present situation, it is nevertheless necessary (for the sake of truth, and because only by knowing the truth precisely can one remedy the errors and deficiencies and restore the organization to health) to say that neither has the majority – in the person of those members of it who have had the responsibility – been able to do what was necessary, so that *de facto* even if not in theory it too has been liquidatory.

So far as the first episode is concerned, I think you know the disagreeable events of last March in Moscow, which had consequences for me personally which were far from brilliant. After the Executive had been arrested in the persons of Amadeo and Ruggero [Grieco], we waited in vain for about a month and a half for information that would establish precisely how things had gone, what limits the police action had had in destroying the organization, and what series of measures the Executive remaining at liberty had taken in order to renew organizational links and reconstitute the party apparatus. Instead, after a first letter written immediately after the arrests and in which it was

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GRAMSCI: POLITICAL WRITINGS 1921–1926

destroyed? It is also necessary to consider that, in the history of revolutionary parties, the aspect represented by Tito's activity is always that which remains most obscure and lends itself most easily to blackmail, waste and swindles. When Tito came to Moscow, he was clearly furious about the letter he had received; but his fury abated when he was given the party's correspondence to read, and it was shown him, pencil in hand, that the phrases considered by him as offensive and without substance had been taken word for word from that correspondence. It then became clear – and Tito admitted – that the two centres operated independently of each other: without any liaison; without the one knowing at least the general lines of the other's activity; and thus with one defaming and discrediting the other. Since my statements had been placed in the minutes, and they had mortified Tito who thought that they were directed at him personally, it was not hard for me to show that although I had from time to time participated in commissions in which his activity was discussed, I had never had any information about it, did not have at my disposal any concrete element to criticize the information of the political centre, and therefore could not have taken any other attitude from the point of view of the narrower interests of the Italian movement.

Unfortunately, this situation has not changed much since. Recently, replying to a reprimand from the budget commission because the party had not handed over to the U.I. [Clandestine Bureau] the full amount which had been allocated to it, the Executive replied that it looked after a great part of the Bureau's activity itself and therefore spent its funds. All that is absurd, and against the most elementary norms of good organization. I have become convinced to my own cost that the so-highly praised and lauded centralism of the Italian party comes down in reality to a very ordinary lack of any division of labour, or precise allocation of responsibilities and spheres of authority. In the conversations I had with Tito, I got the definite impression that he too to a great extent shared this assessment, and is not a little demoralized by the scant regard with which his activity is treated and maltreated. Everyone takes initiatives without warning the centre responsible, which has often already initiated work along the same lines which it has to discontinue. All continuity of initiatives ends by disappearing. Too many people end up knowing the most highly confidential matters; every possibility of control or checking vanishes. People are introduced into the movement whose seriousness and responsibility have not been checked out in advance in any way. I had the impression that Tito was

TOWARDS A NEW LEADING GROUP

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said that all was destroyed and that the central leadership of the party had to be reconstituted *ab imis*,¹⁰³ we received no further concrete information, but merely polemical letters on the question of fusion, written in a style which seemed all the more arrogant and irresponsible in that the author had with his first letter created the impression that the party only continued to exist in his person.¹⁰⁴

There was a stormy session of the commission for technical work, with the participation of a member of the Russian Central Committee who had been in Italy from a month before the fascists came to power to a fortnight afterwards.¹⁰⁵ The question was brutally posed of what the Italian party's central leadership was worth, and of the measures to be taken in view of its absence and its failure to make provision for reorganization. The letters which had been received were harshly criticized, and I was asked what I was going to propose. I will not hide from you that I too shared the disastrous impression caused by the letters, and since I did not have any other material at my disposal, I could not but recognize that the criticisms were justified and more than justified. I therefore went so far as to say that if it was thought that the situation was really such as it objectively appeared from the material available, it would be better to finish things once and for all and reorganize the party from outside, with new elements nominated by the International. I can tell you that in another similar situation I would again make the same proposal, and would have no fear of unleashing all the thunderbolts in the universe.

In reality, the Russian comrades are less centralist than it seems. Perhaps too they had, by other means, more information than I did, and were merely manoeuvring to produce a particular situation. Thus the upshot was that it was merely decided to send a letter to the party which, on the basis of the correspondence from Italy, indicated the measures to be taken and the course to be followed. This letter was answered by Tito with a long account from which it emerged: that the party's internal apparatus had remained completely intact; that the centre represented by Tito had not ceased functioning even for an instant; and that through its liaison, the entire organization had remained alive and vigorous. The scandal became still greater. Whom to believe? Tito, who represented a subordinate and only partially controlled activity, and who could therefore unless known personally be taken for just some confidence-trickster; or those who held the main political posts in the party, who presumably could not be ignorant of the situation and were therefore more believed when they said that all was

TOWARDS A NEW LEADING GROUP

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enormously tired and disheartened by this whole state of affairs, which is why he has tried so persistently to get himself put on leave. The question is a very serious one, and if it is not resolved according to good organizational criteria the situation could become catastrophic.

I am convinced that the situation of our party from the point of view of its legal existence will get worse and worse. The more the constitutional opposition to fascism, centred upon the Reformist party, endangers the real basis of Mussolini's government, the more the lives of our leaders and the security of our organization will be in danger. The fascists will seek to resolve every situation by a hunt for communists, and by raising the spectre of a revolutionary uprising. Constructing a good technical apparatus – with its cogs made up of picked elements, highly experienced, highly disciplined, tried and tested, sufficiently cool of nerve not to lose their heads in any emergency – is becoming a matter of life or death for us. To achieve this, it is really necessary to liquidate much of the party's past situation, with its habitual devil-may-care attitudes, failure to fix responsibilities precisely and clearly, failure to check and immediately punish acts of weakness and irresponsibility. The party must be centralized; but centralization means first and foremost organization and demarcation. It means that when a decision has been taken it cannot be modified by anybody, even one of those attached to centralism, and that no one can create *faits accomplis*.

I will not hide from you that in these two years I have spent out of Italy, I have become very pessimistic and very wary. I have myself often been in a very difficult situation because of the general state of the party: not so far as my personal position is concerned (about which I really do not give a damn, and which anyway I do not think has suffered very much: at most I have involuntarily won the reputation of being a fox of devilish cunning), but in my position as representative of the party, often called upon to resolve questions which would have an immediate effect upon the Italian movement. Having gone to Moscow without being briefed on even one tenth of the questions of the day, I had to pretend to know, and had to carry out unheard of acrobatic feats in order not to demonstrate how irresponsibly representatives were nominated, without any provisions for the journey other than Doctor Grillo's motto: "May God send you all the best".¹⁰⁶

I tolerated many things because the situation in the party and the movement was such, that even the least appearance of a split in the ranks of the majority would have been disastrous and would have given oxygen to the disoriented, directionless minority. My conditions of

health too, which did not allow me to work intensively or with intensive continuity, prevented me from taking up a position which would have required, apart from the burden of a general political responsibility, also the necessity for an intensive activity. The situation today has greatly changed. The questions have been brought out into the open, certainly not through my fault, but partly because people were not willing to follow in time certain suggestions I made and so resolve things automatically. Therefore, I thought it necessary to take the stand I have taken and which I will maintain to the end. I do not know what you are doing at the present time. Once you wrote to me that as soon as I arrived here you would try to make a trip so that we could exchange ideas. If, as I think, you are now provisionally replacing Tito, it would be a good idea if you could find the time to come. There are so many things we could talk about and it might perhaps not be useless.

I have not yet received any definite information concerning the publication of O.N., and although I have written to many comrades I have not yet had any articles as contributions. However, I will start sending the material this week. If necessary, I will put the first issues together entirely myself, while waiting for the contributors to stir themselves. The first issue will be largely devoted to comrade Lenin. I will write the main article, and try to bring out the main features of his personality as a revolutionary leader. I will translate a biography, and make a little anthology of his principal views on the Italian situation in 1920. In the last letter I sent to Negri, I wrote that I was counting not just on your general collaboration, but on a specific contribution from you that would consist in supplying material in each issue for the rubric "Battle of Ideas". I suggested Gobetti's journal and the *Italia libera* movement as the two first subjects to be dealt with. I now think that for the first issue it would be more appropriate for you to make a survey for the rubric of Lenin's books and pamphlets published in Italian, incorporating this survey within an assessment of the function which Lenin's work and prestige have had in Italy over the last years. In any case, I will inform Ruggero that you are permanently in charge of putting this rubric together, and that your material can be put to press without having to make the return journey between here and Italy. If I have any material for the rubric, I will send it you so that you can see it and arrange your work accordingly. I am waiting for a letter from you giving your opinions on the various questions I have discussed in this letter and the others which have been passed on to you.

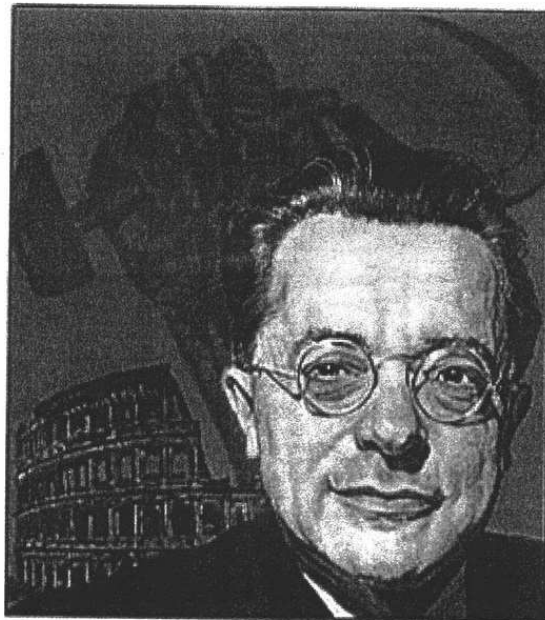
Fraternal greetings

Gramsci

P.S. Naturally, I do not think that, in all I have outlined to you, only questions of organization are involved. The situation of the P., which is reflected in its organization, is the consequence of a general political conception. The problem is thus a political one, and involves not just the present activity but that in the future. Today, it is a problem of relations on the one hand between the party leaders and the mass of members, on the other between the party and the proletariat. Tomorrow, it will be a vaster problem, which will influence the organization and solidity of the workers' State. Not to pose the question to its full extent today would mean going back to the Socialist tradition, and waiting to differentiate oneself until the revolution is at the door, or even until it is already in course. We made a serious mistake in 1919 and 1920 in not attacking the Socialist leadership more resolutely, even if this meant running the risk of expulsion, by constituting a faction that could move out from Turin and be something more than the propaganda *L'Ordine Nuovo* could make. Today, it is not a question of going to such extremes; but, with the relationship reversed, the situation is almost identical and must be confronted with determination and courage.

TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE



ITALY'S TOGGIATTI

The Italian Fascist leader in the background.

A TEXT FROM THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

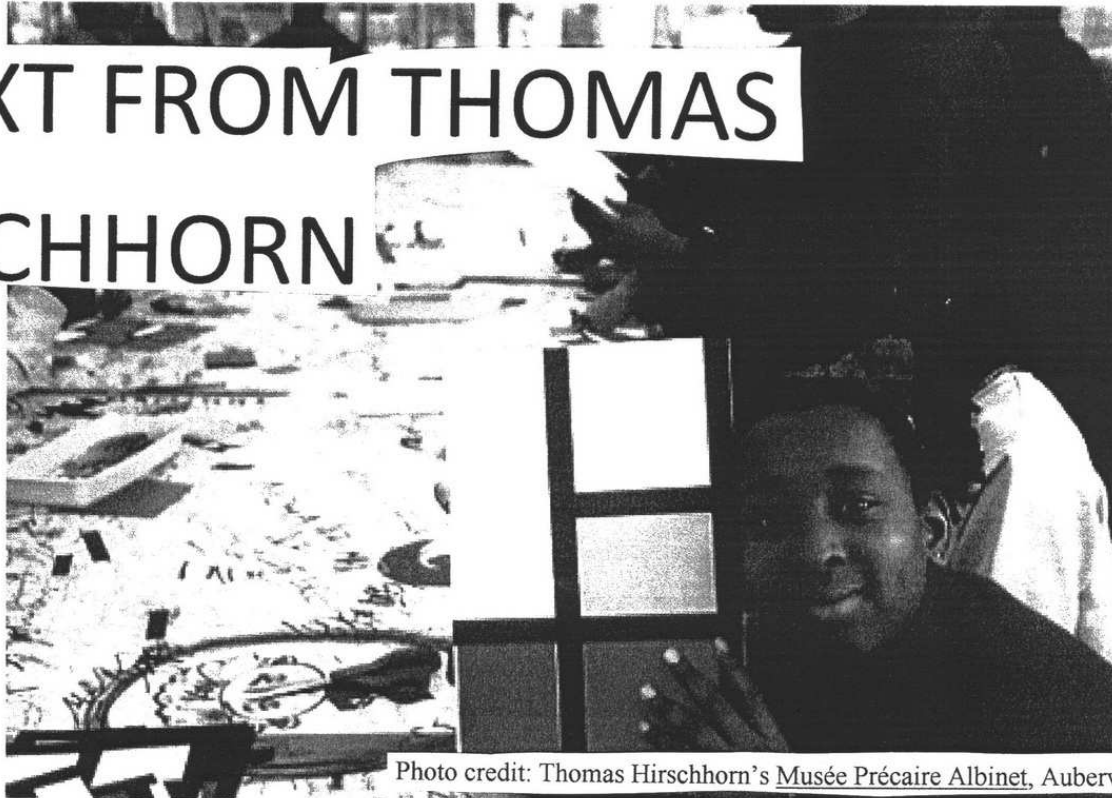


Photo credit: Thomas Hirschhorn's Musée Précaire Albinet, Aubervilliers, France, 2004

About the "Musée Précaire Albinet", about an artists' work in Public Space, and about the artists' role in public.

I am an artist, I am not a social worker. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is a work of art, and not a sociocultural project. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is an affirmation. The affirmation that Art, only as Art, can attain a real importance and have a political meaning. The affirmation that artwork can accomplish something only because it is Art. Only Art doesn't exclude anyone. Only Art has the universal capacity to engage a one to one dialogue. From viewer to artwork and from artwork to viewer. This is why I insist on the fact that the "Musée Précaire Albinet" is an art project. Any other understanding of the "Musée Précaire Albinet" is a misunderstanding or an easy way out. The point is not to reduce art to a sociopolitical field, nor to limit the mission of art to a cultural event. Art is not controllable. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is not controllable and can constantly escape control, at any time. When proposing the project to the inhabitants of the Cité Albinet and Landy area, I said that the "Musée Précaire Albinet" was a mission. A possible mission based on an agreement, but not an impossible mission. An agreement between myself, the artist, and the Cité Albinet, the urban environment itself, the Public Space. If I want to work in Public Space, as an artist, I then must agree with Public Space. In a gallery, museum, private collection or when participating in an exhibition, I don't necessarily have to agree. But when working in Public Space, to agree is a necessity which makes the work so demanding. Agreeing means to agree with the mission. I must agree constantly and at all times, because only if I agree with my mission in Public Space, can I cooperate. I must cooperate with reality in order to change it. Reality cannot be changed unless you agree with it. As an artist with a project in Public Space, I am compelled to agree with reality. To agree does not mean to approve of. To agree means to dare assert without explaining, without justifying, without discussing, without argumentation, without communicating. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is not arguable, nor is it justifiable. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is an affirmation, in agreement with its neighborhood, its inhabitants, its location, its program, its visitors, and its activities. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is not based on respect, it is based on love. To affirm something does not mean to respect something, to affirm something means to love something. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" claims to be a breakthrough. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" claims to be a concrete manifesto on the artists' role in public. This project claims to be the utopian realization of a concrete artistic practice. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" holds within itself the violence of transgression. I am not a historian, neither a scientist nor a researcher. I am a warrior. I, myself, must constantly fight the ideology of the possible, the ideology of what is allowed and I must fight the logic of the cultural. I, myself, must constantly fight the good conscience and the ideology of the political-correctness theory. I must constantly encourage myself to take the right decision, and I must encourage myself to remain free and to stick to the affirmation of the "Musée Précaire Albinet". The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is a project that does not want to improve, nor soothe, nor tranquilize. With this project, I want to dare touch what cannot be touched, the other. I want to engage dialogue with the other without neutralizing him. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" does not work towards justice or democracy. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" does not want to show what is "possible" or "impossible". The artists' freedom and the autonomy of art are not serving a cause. If an artist is told for what purpose he should work, then the work is not art. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is a project in complete overwork, in total exaggeration. By its' very excess and unreason, this project becomes each day a more profound affirmation. It becomes even more demanding for the receiver than for the giver. This project must constantly assert its' *raison d'être*, and defend its' autonomy as artwork. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" must continuously be rebuilt and reconceived in my mind and in the minds of the Public Space. The "Musée Précaire Albinet" is a project full of complexity, contradiction, difficulty and beauty too. It is the short, rare and non-spectacular moments of confrontation of which Art is capable for anyone, anywhere and anytime. I shall never say that the "Musée Précaire Albinet" is a success, nor shall I ever say it is a failure.

Thomas Hirschhorn

WHAT'S GOING ON? FEED BACK

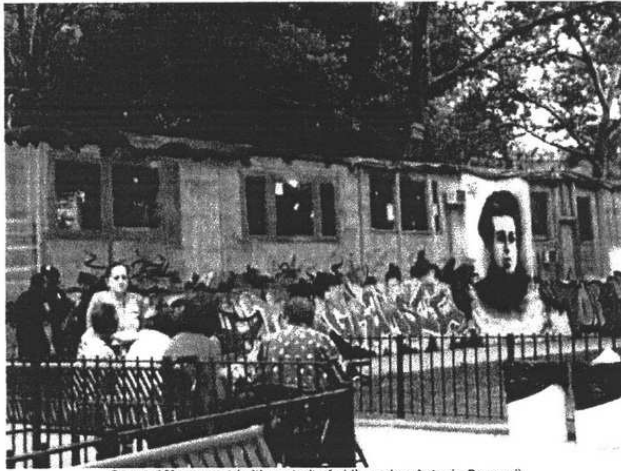
CultureGrrl

Lee Rosenbaum's cultural commentary

HOME ABOUT CONTACT

Thomas Hirschhorn's Lively Gramsci Monument Brings Intellectual Gobbledygook to the Masses (with video)

July 31, 2013 by CultureGrrl



Gramsci Monument (with portrait of philosopher Antonio Gramsci)
Photo by Lee Rosenbaum

Swiss artist **Thomas Hirschhorn's** Gramsci Monument, presented by the Dia Art Foundation (to Sept. 15), is a ramshackle, purpose-built philosophers' lair that works admirably as a vibrant community center, but not so well as an incubator of public intellectuals.

The joint was jumping on the balmy Saturday afternoon when I visited: It was Family Day—a celebratory community event accompanied by lively dance grooves and abundant barbecued food. Gramsci's target audience is the population of Forest Houses, the public housing complex on Tinton Avenue in the down-at-the-heels Morrisania section of the South Bronx on whose grounds Dia's temporary "monument" is situated.

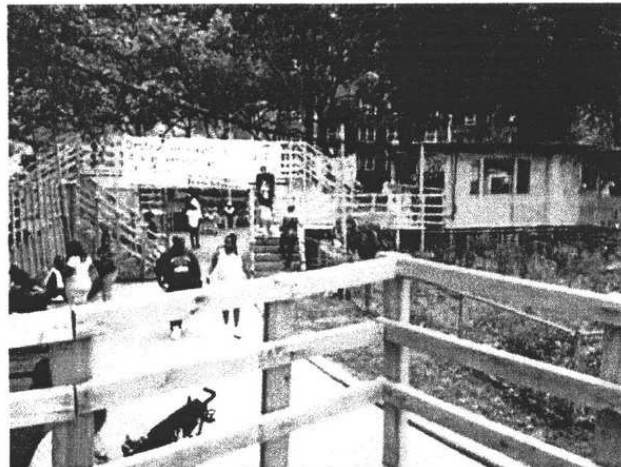


Photo by Lee Rosenbaum

Named for **Antonio Gramsci** (1891-1937), the activist journalist, Marxist philosopher and head of Italy's Communist Party (who opposed Mussolini and went to prison for it), this \$500,000 project functions more successfully as a social, recreational gathering place than as a vehicle for

"mak[ing] the philosopher's work accessible to the public"—the artist's stated intention.

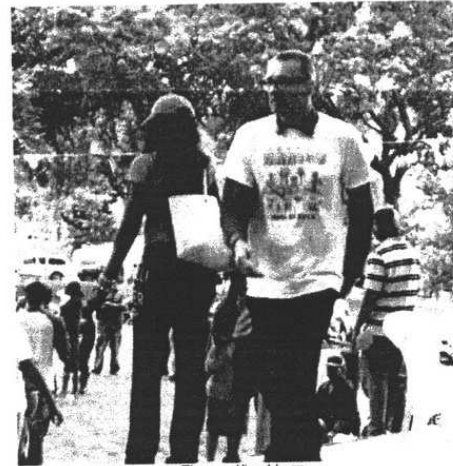
For that, Hirschhorn should have picked a more accessible scholar-in-residence than Berlin-based philosopher **Marcus Steinweg**, whose daily impenetrable lectures (77 orations in total) are poorly attended ordeals. Don't just take my word for this: You can hear his opaque take on "Transcendental Headlessness" at the end of my video; below. The only way this blather works is as parody, but I don't think that's how it was intended.

Had I known that the celebrated artist **Glenn Ligon** was to be a guest speaker yesterday (July 30), I probably would have returned to hear him. According to the banner behind him at the evidently well attended talk, this was a homecoming for Ligon:



Photo from Gramsci Monument's website

On the July 13 afternoon when I perambulated Gramsci, Hirschhorn was a mostly silent,



Thomas Hirschhorn
Photo by Lee Rosenbaum

The multitasking frontman for the day's activities and events was **DJ Baby Dee** (whom you'll see in the video below). He did double duty as a dynamic master of the dance floor and a master of ceremonies for speaker introductions.

Before the dance club morphed into a philosophy classroom, **Erik Farmer**, president of the Forest Houses Resident Association (who partnered with Hirschhorn to realize this project), took the microphone and briefly alluded to a "man who passed last week."



Erik Farmer (in the wheelchair), with microphone
Photo by Lee Rosenbaum

A Dia spokesperson later told me that Farmer had been referring to **Jamal Davis**, a young community resident who was known to many of those who had worked to develop Gramsci Monument. Fatally shot on the sidewalk just outside the complex, he was honored with a makeshift memorial there:

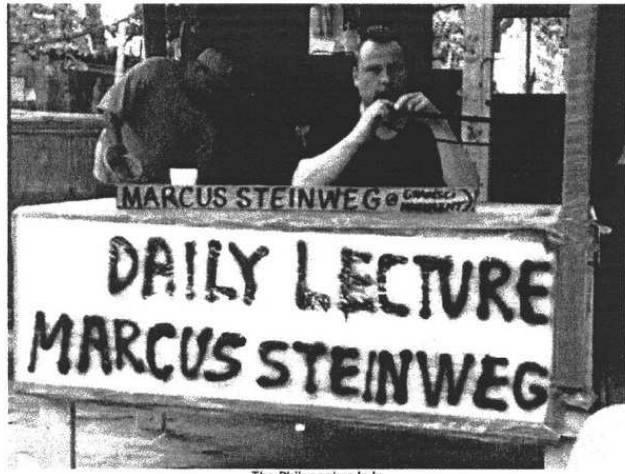


Photo by Lee Rosenbaum

As it happened, a few hours after I returned home from my visit on July 13, the **George Zimmerman** verdict came down. That highly controversial acquittal "was the main topic of Sunday's Open Mic. A poetry workshop focused on this topic too," **Melissa Parsoff**, the Dia's spokesperson, told me later.

Marcus Green, a guest scholar of a more populist bent, preceded Steinweg on the day when I visited. The author of a book on Gramsci and an assistant professor of history and political science at Otterbein University in Westerville, OH, Green did a better job than Steinweg in relating to a general audience. "Everyone is a philosopher," he assured us. "We all think about the world; we all engage with the world....The idea of knowing thyself is to know that you are an intellectual, that you're no different than the professional intellectual." That seems to me a stretch, but at least Green was welcoming, not off-putting.

If Hirschhorn was truly interested in cultivating what he calls a "non-exclusive audience," engaging Steinweg was a misstep. Far from bringing philosophy's power to the people, his discombobulated discourse could only alienate the few Forest Houses residence who showed up to hear him.



The Philosopher is In
Photo by Lee Rosenbaum

By contrast, Green's talk (snippets of which you'll also hear in the video) may have had a fittingly Gramscian effect—inspiring the downtrodden to tell truth to power. Bringing the now convicted leaker of government secrets, **Bradley Manning**, into the discussion, Green provocatively interpreted his actions as consistent with Gramsci's belief that "the truth is revolutionary."

For alternate views on Gramsci Monument, read **Andrew Russett** of the *NY Observer* ("Easily the most energetic public artwork the city has seen in years."); **Ken Johnson** of the *NY Times*, who misspelled the Morrisania neighborhood as "Morissania" ("I left feeling irritable and depressed."); and **Peter Schjeldahl** of the *New Yorker* ("This year's most captivating new art work.") I come down somewhere in the middle.

Now come down with me to the Bronx, my own native borough, to see Hirschhorn's convoluted creation for yourself—the dancing, the murals, the children's artworks, the computer room, the cameramen from the *PBS "Art21"* series, and even a campaigning Mayoral candidate (guess who), distributing flyers. (You may, at times, have to adjust the volume on your computer to hear my narration over the din of the dance music.)

WNYC News

Art Talk: The Artist is Present, but in the South Bronx?

Friday, August 02, 2013

By Gisele Regatao : Executive Producer, WNYC News

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Gramsci Monument at Forest Houses, a public housing complex in the Morrisania neighborhood of the Bronx. (Gisele Regatao)

Like it or not, art often comes with the artist these days.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION [6]

Last July, Jay-Z performed his song "Picasso Baby" for six hours at a Chelsea gallery. Actress Tilda Swinton could recently be found napping on display inside a glass box. And most New Yorkers

remember Serbian artist Marina Abramovic's show at the Museum of Modern Art that had people sitting to stare at her.

Now, Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn is also present at his art installation. His Gramsci Monument is far from Manhattan's museums though. It's on the grounds of Forest Houses, a public housing complex in the Morrisania neighborhood of the Bronx.

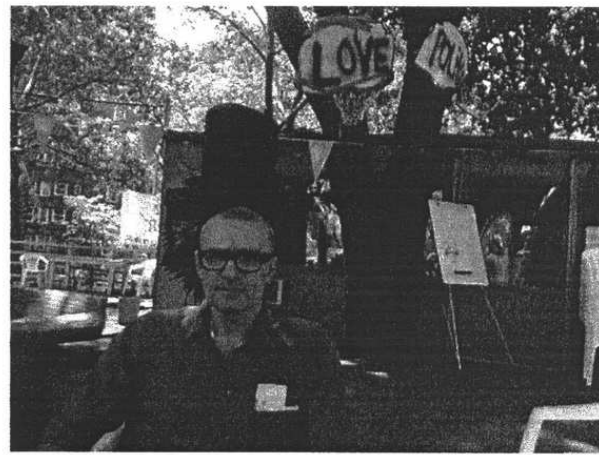
The piece is named after Antonio Gramsci, the late Italian political theorist and Marxist. It consists of a plywood structure that features rooms with an internet area, a library, an arts room, and even a cafe and a pond.

Art critic and WNYC contributor Deborah Solomon said the Gramsci Monument, which is open to the public until September 15th and free, is definitely worth a trip to The Bronx. "It's a thrillingly inclusive, daring piece that anybody who cares about the future of art should see," she said.

www.wnyc.org/articles/wnyc-news/2013/aug/02/art-talk-artist-present-south-bronx/

To listen to the whole interview with Solomon, with local residents, and with Hirschhorn, click on the audio link above.

And do you like it when the artist is present or do you think they only get on the way of the work? Leave your comment below.



Deborah Solomon
Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn

TAGS: art talk, bronx, gramsci, life, thomas hirschhorn

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GISELE REGATAO, Executive Producer, WNYC News
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Gisele Regatao is the Executive Producer for WNYC News, where she oversees a team of producers and hosts, and the local content for *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. She is also in charge of the cultural coverage coming out of the Newsroom.

Deborah Solomon

Thanks for all your comments. Interesting to me that Hirschhorn manages to be on the premises of his Gramsci Monument without turning himself into the center of the piece. He tiptoes around the place as if he were a handyman tending to the weeds in the garden and the leaky roof. Marina Abramovic, on the other hand, commandeered the galleries of MOMA in an effort to become an art deity. He's more radical; she's more theatrical.

Aug. 02 2013 08:12 AM

Score: 0/0

rachel from nyc

With the rise of performance art, there is a fine line between a pop cultural happening and art with a capital "A". Anything that brings people together to have an experience is a good thing. What a great thing Gramsci has compiled - his presence, like the other exhibits you mention, only adds value.

Aug. 02 2013 07:52 AM

Score: 0/0

Romulo from NYC

When the artist is present it gives a piece with a point of view a human and personal dimension. Speaking with the artist you get to know his/her personality, this provides another dimension or perspective to the piece and can make the piece more approachable.

Aug. 02 2013 07:42 AM

Score: 0/0

Deborah Solomon

I agree; it is great to have Thomas Hirschhorn on the premises to answer questions and chat. You can reach the Gramsci Monument on either the 2 or 5 trains — it's the Prospect Avenue stop in the South Bronx.

Aug. 02 2013 07:36 AM

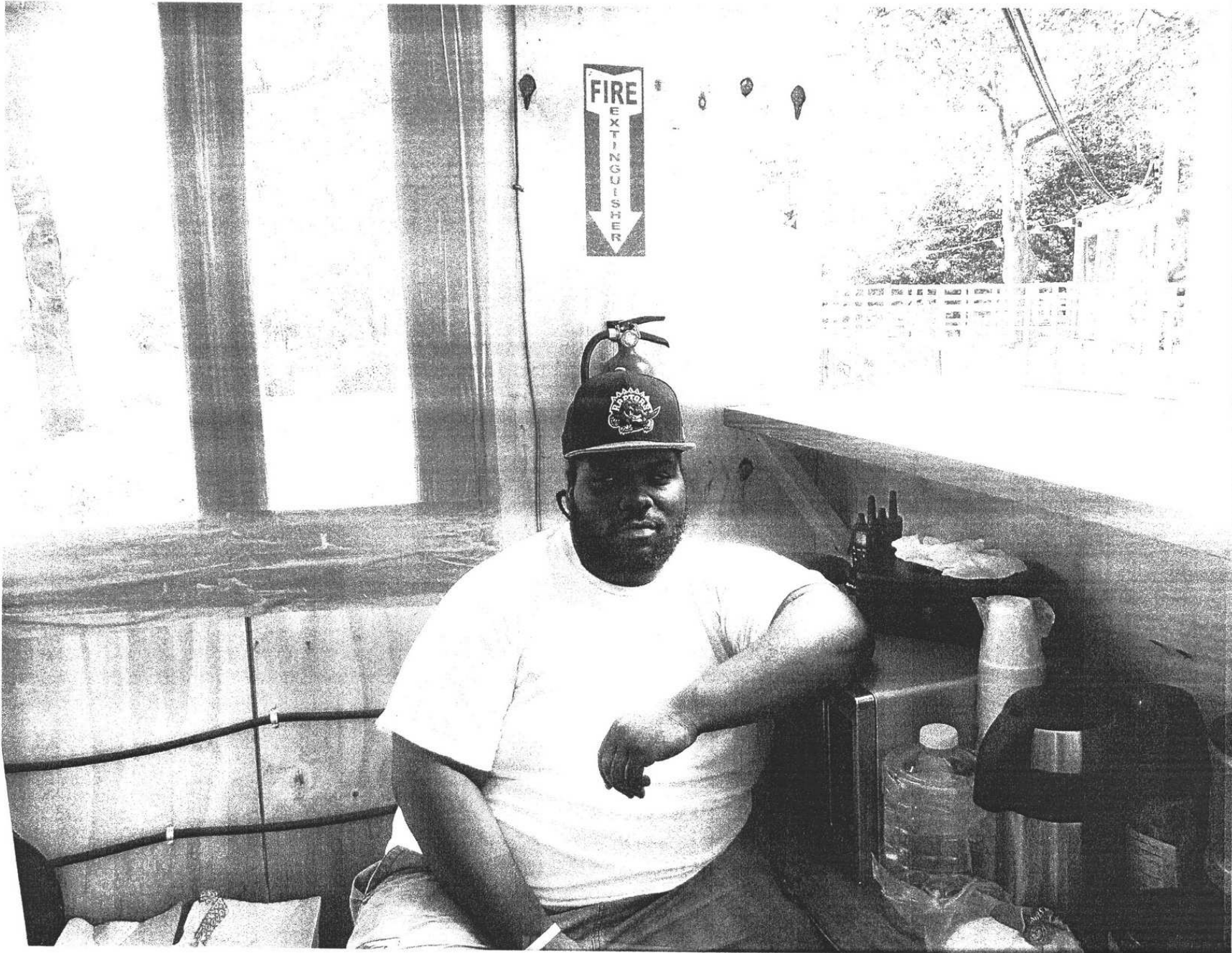
Score: 0/0

CACHin from JPN

Sounds like a interesting installation... Also, a great idea to have the artist around to interact with the piece. I am sure those who aren't found of the work could start a debate and learn about monument. I hope the local community visit appreciate the artist intention. How would a visitor get to this moment? Did I miss that part the audio?

Aug. 02 2013 07:01 AM

RESIDENT OF THE DAY



JOSHUA PACK