

# THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT- NEWSPAPER



"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)

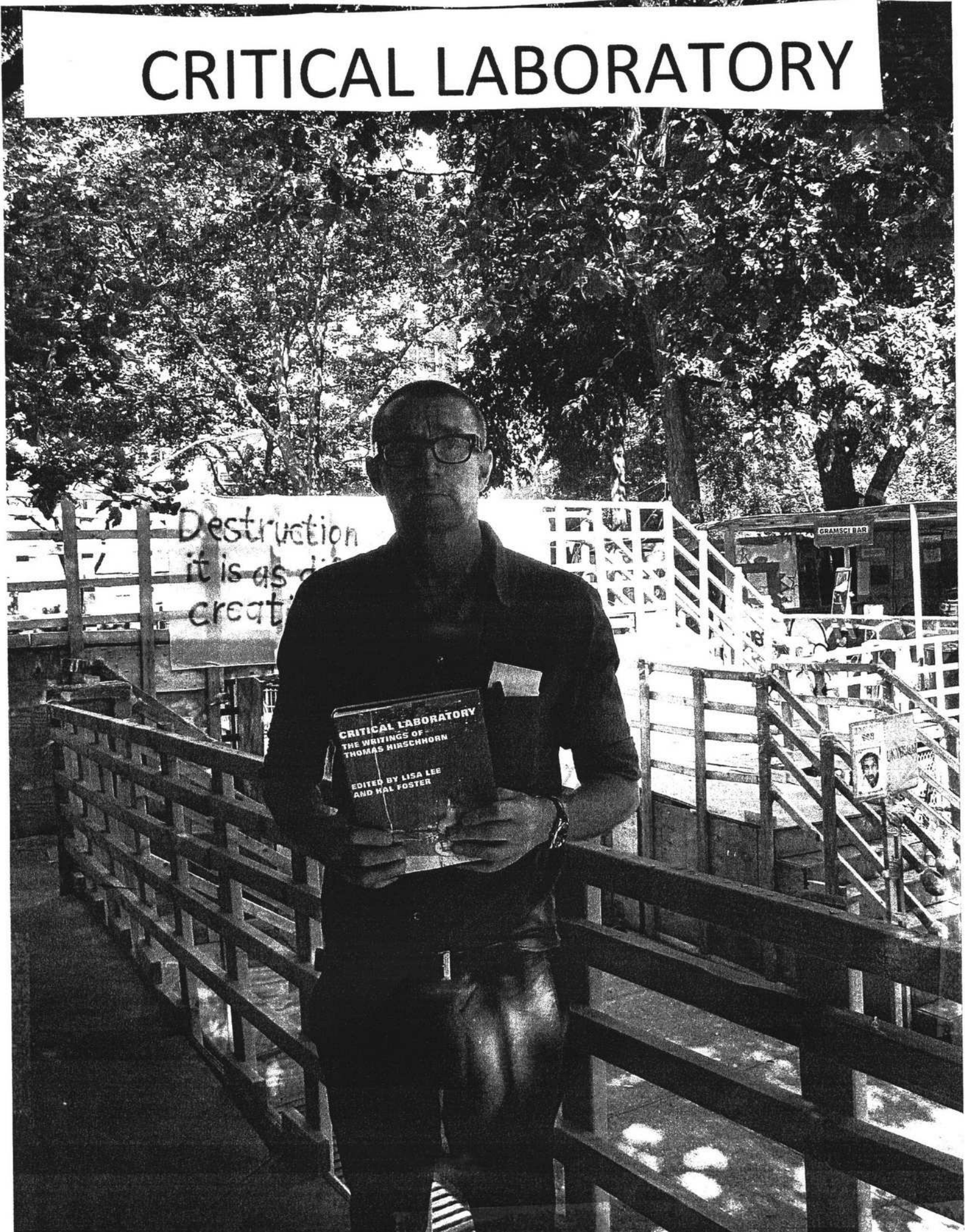


[www.gramsci-monument.com](http://www.gramsci-monument.com)

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## CRITICAL LABORATORY



THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

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Bronx, NY 10456







Sunday  
Partly Cloudy

 **84** °F | °C

Precipitation: 10%  
Humidity: 50%  
Wind: 8 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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1 AM	4 AM	7 AM	10 AM	1 PM	4 PM	7 PM	10 PM
Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
							
86° 68°	84° 68°	82° 72°	82° 66°	79° 63°	79° 64°	82° 64°	81° 66°



# CONCERNING THE BATAILLE MONUMENT

## 1. Preparations for the Bataille Monument in Paris and in Kassel

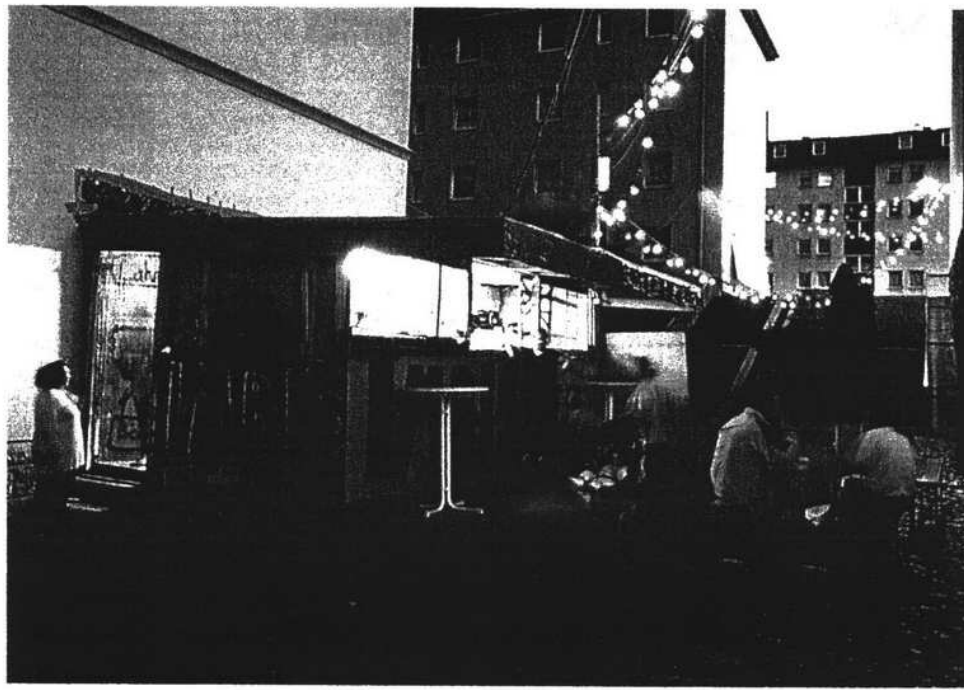
From my experience with projects in public space—and so far I have worked on 43 projects, both large and small—I know that the preparation phase is extraordinarily important. For this project two aspects had to be prepared at the same time. On the one hand was preparation on the ground in Kassel, which encompassed the selection of a site for the project, looking for potential partners, grants, on-site organization, and generally getting to know the city of Kassel. On the other hand was preparation in Paris, including the substantive discussion on Georges Bataille, the people who did the workshops, preparing the “software”, that is, materials needed independent of site selection and other local aspects. I tried to use the time available as extensively as possible. Together with Okwui [Artistic director Okwui Enwezor of Nigeria] I set the basic features of the project early on: It would be a project in public space, as part of the “monuments” series; it was about Georges Bataille, as third in a total of four philosophers, that had been previously selected. Owing to the experience I had had up to then with the monuments, I wanted to further develop the Bataille Monument. That is why, even before I visited Kassel for the first time, I had already decided in November 2000 that I wanted to make a monument with a number of elements. I wanted to make it right where people live. In other words, in a housing complex. I wanted to do it with the residents; especially because of what I learned from the Deleuze Monument, I wanted to supervise and follow the project myself for the duration of the exhibition. I also wanted to be there when it was dismantled. That much had been discussed with Okwui and was clear in my head. All in all I made ten short trips to Kassel in the period from November 2000 to April 2002. I knew I wanted to devote as much personal energy as possible to this project; that is, to travel there without any assistants. That is always difficult, since different laws prevail in public space than in a museum or gallery. So it was imperative, for example, to be able to speak the language spoken at the site. Through an acquaintance I contacted Robin Dannenberg, a social worker in Kassel, who was supposed to help out in the various phases of the project. More important for me than his qualifications as a social worker was the fact that he knew the city very well and could help me clarify the site issue during the preparation phase. I knew that the site question was extremely important, and that precisely because it is so decisive, it can only be resolved instinctively, in a kind of emergency situation. This is because, although I spent all in all more than two months in Kassel, I don't really know the city, so I needed information from residents, acquaintances, informational material from the city, and of course by visiting the locations that were being considered. Because I wanted it to be possible to mentally transplant the location to another district in the city or another city or another country, the site had to allow for that. The selected site thus had to inherently possess this element of asserting its ability to be transplanted. And yet it also had to be a place that satisfied the criteria I introduced earlier. Only instinct can help in such a case! The most important thing in selecting a location in Kassel was the potential helpers, the residents, the supporting contact people. And insofar, getting to know Lothar Kannenberg, the independent initiator of the Philippinenhof Boxing Camp was of prime importance. After visiting and talking with him and the young people he boxes with on several occasions, I was certain that the Philippinenhof Boxing Camp and the charismatic and exemplary position of Lothar Kannenberg had to be an important fixed point for my project in the housing complex. It was up to me to convince him and the youngsters of the seriousness of my project. I succeeded in doing that, for one thing, because I admire him. For the fight that he is fighting with himself. He has become a true friend. The dynamics of the boxing camp was therefore one of many deciding factors in selecting a site, and getting to know Lothar Kannenberg was important for the project. This alone explains the long preparation phase.

Preparations in Paris, including working with Christophe Fiat, who explained the work of Georges Bataille to me from his own personal slant and in context, was quite an enrichment for me. In dialogue with Christophe, I explored the work of Georges Bataille. This was new for him as well as for me. He explained Georges Bataille to me. I encouraged him to map out Bataille's work for me visually. Together with Christophe I made four trips to stations in Georges Bataille's life. This was one of the best parts of the work on Georges Bataille. The four trips were to St. German en Laye, Veslay, Lacoste, and the caves of Lascaux. As short as they were, these trips were an important step toward understanding the work of Georges Bataille as well as demanding to deal with it freely. Christophe Fiat always made succinct, precise statements that helped me understand the contexts in the life and work of Georges Bataille. These trips had a significance that went beyond the status of implementing the Bataille Monument. They were moments of insight.



Thomas Hirschhorn  
« Bataille Monument », 2002 (Imbiss)  
'Documenta 11', Kassel, 2002  
(photo : Werner Maschmann)  
Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York





Thomas Hirschhorn  
 « Bataille Monument », 2002 (Imbiss)  
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## 2. Construction

It took two months to set up the Bataille Monument. There were between 20 and 30 young people and other residents of the housing complex working on it. My project was to seek no experts, art students or other art connoisseurs to help build it. Instead, I wanted to build my project together with the residents. It was no problem to find young people and other residents wanting to work on the project. The incentive was the 8 € that I paid as an hourly wage. I will come back to the problem regarding payment later on. For me, one thing that was certain was that everyone would be paid for his or her work. I hate volunteerism for the sake of art! I refuse to appeal to volunteers, that is, unpaid workers, in order to implement my work of art.

Constructing the Bataille Monument was the hardest project I ever created. I went beyond my limits; I was worn out. I really had to activate strength that I did not have. The construction was greatly overtaxing, in terms of technical efforts, organization, group dynamics. It was one big mess-up. I never had as many doubts about the Bataille Monument as I did during the set-up phase. I wanted to create my project with young people and residents from the housing complex; I did not want to exclude anyone. No one and never! I said, "If you live here, you can work on the project!" The group that came together was very diverse, with respect to age, cultural and social background, attitude toward work. When despite all the problems we made it through the first week, I went home—I had moved into an apartment in the complex—to discover that my apartment had been broken into and my personal hi-fi, photography and video equipment had been stolen. I knew that it was one of us and I knew that the continuation of the project was thus uncertain. I had serious doubts about my project. I knew that I would have to provoke a solution since this was a test of my project's contact with reality. In other words, was my project too out of touch with reality? I also had to take responsibility for what happened. I didn't have any choice. Either this was a test that I would pass, or it would be the end of my project. I could pass the test only if I got back all of the stolen property without having to look for the culprit or culprits and without calling in the police. I passed the test. I was only able to pass it because I always focussed on my art project. I knew when everything was returned that my project was difficult and complex, but it was not out of touch with reality. I had doubted my work, but it helped me eliminate all other choices. It put me in an emergency situation in order to make the right decision. I was doing the project because at that moment I was confronted with the fundamental question that was posed: What do I want? I could not answer this question hypothetically. I had to be active; I had to act and use a certain degree of authority and also force. I had to counter theory with practice. This experience and the happy outcome to this test strengthened me in my goal of not wanting to exclude anyone from working on the project. Despite pressure from the group of workers toward the suspected thieves, I thought if art is not capable of resisting this normative pressure of exclusion, then nothing and no one will be able to!

The construction with the daily, not irresolvable but often simultaneously appearing problems was an act of strength in which I had a hard time assessing the extent to which it was an act of strength because I, Thomas Hirschhorn, was the initiator, the organizer, the employer. Paying attention only to the time, I too often lost contact with the experience of building it together. I think it is also impossible for me to say with certainty that it is possible to do it any other way, that it can be done differently! One thing that I *can* say certainly occurred and which is not a new, that is, unknown, phenomenon for me is satellite formation. A negative experience that I have had more than once, which I also could not prevent on this project, is that of isolating myself, of cutting myself off from the group project of Documenta 11. Despite the excellent starting conditions, and by that I mean the relationship to the Documenta 11 team, I was not able to avoid all conflicts. Not that I was afraid of conflict or that I tried to avoid it, but Platform 5 is a group exhibition. On the one hand there were objective reasons for this satellite formation: the geographical distance between my project and the main venues of the exhibition, the increasing stress as opening date approached, and the growing, clear-cut hierarchies that were forming, which had a negative effect as regards technical help since we were further away. But I also think I myself participated in creating a conflict and building up negative energy, since I don't resist this urge to be a lone fighter. It is not the first time this happened and I think it is absolutely unnecessary, especially since I was not agitating myself only, but this time it also involved the people working with me. From the set-up phase I remember the wonderful answer that Marco, one of the workers, gave to a passer-by who asked, "Is that supposed to be art?". He responded, "Yes, because we did it together!" In spite of everything, construction was completed on June 5th, 2002, right on schedule, and all the elements of the Bataille Monument were finished!



### 3. Opening of the Bataille Monument

The opening of the Bataille Monument, like the rest of the Documenta 11 exhibition, took place over the course of three days. I decided that we would celebrate it in the housing complex for three days. Every day, that is, on the 6th, 7th, and 8th of June there were free drinks and food at the snack bar starting at 6 p.m. On the one hand, I wanted to thank the residents of the complex, who accepted the project in spite of the noise and the space we used. On the other hand, I wanted to have our own opening celebration here in the housing complex. This went well, although the Kaban family, who ran the snack bar, was totally overrun by the storm of kids. Most importantly, the opening celebration in the complex served to create a mixed audience. Though I must admit that I organized that deliberately. I had assumed that the visitors who came to the opening of the Documenta 11 would not correspond to the regular visitors, so that on these three days the invitation to the locals encouraged a directed mixing of residents and Documenta 11 visitors took place. I was surprised at how many Documenta 11 visitors came to the Friedrich Wöhler housing complex. Although it definitely took a lot of time and the program schedule was very full, I noticed the seriousness and genuine curiosity of many visitors. Was that the Documenta mythos? That is why I was also surprised at how fast many people voiced opinions of my work—already on the first evening! I posted a quotation by David Hammons on the freestanding panels set up at the two shuttle stops, in the Friedrich Wöhler housing complex and in front of the entrance to the Binding Brewery: "The art audience is the worst audience in the world. It's overly educated, its conservative, it's out to criticize, not to understand and it never has any fun. Why should I spend my time playing to that audience? That's like going into a lion's den. So I refuse to deal with that audience, and I'll play with the street audience. That audience is much more human and their opinion is from the heart. They don't have any reason to play games; there's nothing gained or lost." I read this quotation in London in the "Protest and Survive" exhibition that I participated in. This quote is both problematic and contradictory, but it strikes the core of the complexity of work in public space and the audience of public space. David Hammons is part of the art world and his work is part of the art market. Nonetheless, these sentences also defiantly assert the autonomy of a work of art. I wanted to honor that and at the same time propose it as an appeal for reflection and as a link between the two stops of the "shuttle service". It is also an homage to the artist David Hammons, whose work I value very much. What I see in this quote that applies entirely for my Bataille Monument project is that it also has nothing to win or lose. Work in public space can be neither a success nor a failure. Instead, it is about the experience, about exposing oneself, about enduring and working out an experience. A project in public space is never a total success or a total failure. I think working in public space does not need these criteria. Am I capable of making contact with people? Am I capable of creating events? Am I acting in earnest?

Right on opening day I realized that earlier—during planning, preparations, and set-up—I had never thought the Bataille Monument could be discussed and criticized as a social art project. I think it is totally proper if social issues are raised through an art project. It is the question as to the surroundings, the environment, the world in its broadest sense. That is a goal of my work. I am not afraid of false interpretations or over-interpretations or misunderstandings. But one thing was and has always been clear for me: I am an artist and not a social worker. My project is an art project that aims to assert its autonomy as an art project! This was the starting point and cornerstone of all the discussions I had with the people working on the project as well as with the visitors. Precisely because the Bataille Monument is an art project it is possible to refuse to exclude anyone from working on it; and because the Bataille Monument is an art project it is also imperative that it not be influenced by wishes of the residents as regards content. The guideline was: "As the artist I am not helping you; I don't want to help you or ask you how I can help. Instead, as the artist I am asking, can you and do you want to help me complete my project?" I think this was acknowledged and accepted by the residents and the workers. I wanted to make it clear to the residents of the housing complex why I wanted to create my work of art right there with them. I wanted to create my work of art in a housing complex that is itself a piece of reality. Without illusions; without phantasms. I wanted to act; I wanted to act with and through art. Hope not as dream or escape. Hope as discussion and confrontation, hope as the principle of taking action. You take action only because you have hope. And if the Bataille Monument is supposed to be set up, supervised, and taken down, together with the artist, what is more natural, more logical, than asking the residents for help? Why should this project be set up and supervised by specialists if there are enough people in this housing complex who are available to do the work? What is the more obvious choice and more understandable? And what makes more sense than to say: "The assistance by especially talented, fast, or specialized technicians is not needed; assistance by the residents is needed!" For the simple reason that the project is being done here! To that extent the workers were never "materials". Instead, I could not complete my project on my own and that is why I posed the question and demand: "Don't do it my way! Let's do it together!"



Thomas Hirschhorn  
« Bataille Monument », 2002 (Fahrdienst)  
'Documenta 11', Kassel, 2002  
(photo : Werner Maschmann)  
Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York



#### 4.a. Shuttle service

I wanted the shuttle service to be an element of the Bataille Monument and not a separate service. The shuttle service was to create an actual link to go from the housing complex to the Binding Brewery and vice versa. It was a kind of taxi that shuttled at no charge between the Bataille Monument and the other parts of platform 5 of the Documenta 11. The shuttle service was also intended as a means of regulating the flow of visitors. I did not want visitors to come to the Bataille Monument by the busload or in tourist vans; I wanted them to come in small groups. A maximum of four people fit in our Mercedes-Benz. I thought it would facilitate personal conversations and would protect the housing complex from large groups of art tourists. In fact, I think it is only possible to confront art on an individual basis. Groups of art tourists could of course not be totally avoided, but at least it was left up to the initiative of the respective groups and nothing was done to encourage them. Five drivers were specially trained and the shuttle service was one element that completed its task of transporting people and engaging in conversation during the drive. The drivers themselves contributed to making the visit to the Bataille Monument a real event for many visitors. At first I intended to use four vehicles, but that proved impossible for financial reasons, so we used two cars that were usually used to capacity. It was unavoidable that lines developed at the shuttle stop at the Binding Brewery. This was not very satisfying. It got especially bad toward the end of the exhibition period. I had to admit that even my project led to lines developing, making it necessary to wait in line. This is one thing I criticize about exhibition operations. Four cars would have reduced but not totally prevented these lines, in view of the fact that often one of the cars was being repaired. The shuttle service did turn out to be an expensive element of the Bataille Monument, since besides purchasing and maintaining the cars, buying gas, and of course the hourly wages of the drivers, the two cars were in the garage more than ten times in all. This could have been attributed to the fact that we bought used cars or to the different driving styles of the drivers. Also, the repairs were often done unsatisfactorily or incompetently, which was my responsibility, since I always simply wanted the cars to be back on the road as fast as possible, no matter who did the repairs and how much it cost. There were no accidents, which is evidence of the seriousness and commitment with which the drivers carried out their mission.

#### 4.b. "Georges Bataille" Library

The "Georges Bataille" Library was intended to facilitate connections based on the work of Georges Bataille. For this reason there were no books in the library by or about Georges Bataille. Instead, there were books on five subjects: Word, image, art, sports, and sex. These "force fields" of the work of Bataille were supposed to expand and develop. Uwe Fleckner, who proposed these categories and selected most of the books and cassettes, put together the list of books in an extremely precise and subjective manner. I am very pleased that he insisted on his selection uncompromisingly and without trying to curry favor with anyone. However, I must admit that at first I was surprised at the relatively small number of books. There were a total of 700 books and cassettes. I think I was surprised because we had set up too many book stands and when the books were all placed on the shelves it looked rather empty. This was difficult to stand in the beginning but it was good to have resisted the urge to want to fill the shelves. Also, I had underestimated the list of books compiled by Uwe Fleckner and I am happy that we did not only post it but we also laid out photocopies of the list. Very many visitors took a copy with them. I do not regard that as positive in itself because it could also have had to do with the consumer urge to want to take something with you. But the book list was not only form, it is also program and can make sense even separate from the library. The "library" space with chairs, sofas, and armchairs was a room and a meeting place for the young people from the housing complex. In a realistic and modest appraisal, this led in isolated cases to residents of the complex borrowing books. I recall Elfriede, who borrowed and read all the books by Marquis de Sade, not having previously known this author. The greatest demand was for the video cassettes. What impressed me regarding the pornographic videos was that no one said anything moralizing about them to me. Aside from the initial discussions about the overboard success of these videos and the fact that it could not be guaranteed that no young people under 18 would also watch them, the subject of "sex" in the library seemed to regulate itself insofar as within a few days all that was left in the library of the pornographic videos were the empty cases. The library was an open space where visitors and residents, especially the young people, could meet. I noted that it was important, on the one hand, that this room belong to the young people (since they live here), but a balance should also exist, such that it was a library that functioned as a library, where people could calmly borrow, browse through, or read a book. I had many different experiences in and around the library. I liked it when the residents said, "I'm going to the library," or "Let's meet in the library."

#### 4.c. Bataille exhibition

The aim of the "Bataille exhibition" was to convey information and knowledge about the life and work of Georges Bataille. Four parts of the exhibition were devoted to this goal. The topography in the center of the room showed two superimposed maps: the diagram of Georges Bataille's work and the relief map of the city of Kassel. The books of Georges Bataille were placed there to represent the buildings; that is, the works were the structures. With four integrated videos and the video on the "Papuan" I wanted to depict the movement, the dynamic forces in the life of Georges Bataille, as well as what I considered his incredible topical relevance. I made sure that the videos were constantly running and that the sound of the each one was always understandable. Especially after initial misunderstandings about the use and purpose of the video equipment, this ultimately worked well, which I feel is very important, since there is nothing more trying than



non-functioning videos in exhibitions. I am pleased that we managed to keep them going in the Friedrich Wöhler housing complex to the very end. The third part of the exhibition were the freestanding panels. The materials on them were supposed to shed light on essential points in the work of Bataille. Here there was too much information that was only in French. I paid too little attention during the planning phase in Paris to make sure enough written materials in German were selected for the freestanding panels. Criticism that was expressed in this regard was totally justified. Finally, the fourth and most important part of the exhibition were the books by and about Georges Bataille. I tried to have all books in German, English, French, and Turkish available to look through. I think there was too little space to do this. The exhibition room was too small, so the books were not easily accessible. There was no real seating available which made it inconvenient to look through the books. The books were there but their presentation was hardly more than symbolic. There was physical space but no mental space available for the works of Bataille. I also think the role played by the respective workers at the exhibition was not sufficiently defined. They were the only ones involved in the Bataille Monument who had only a passive role. It was not possible for them to become actively involved; just like in a museum, they only paid attention to what was going on around them. That it what made it nice at least that the children from the housing complex often sat down on the sofa when their older friends were there working as attendants. One thing I liked about the exhibition as well as the other sections (library, TV studio) were the writing, graffiti, and drawings that covered up more and more of the empty spaces on the panels over the course of the exhibition. That form of appropriation is beautiful in the way it gets increasingly dense and takes over the panels. This was not planned or intended. While some of these added content and statements that could then be discussed, they were also a *formal* enrichment. At the same time it brought greater complexity of content to the Bataille Monument.

#### 4.d. Snack bar

I gained considerable experience from my previous project, the Deleuze Monument. For example, in discussion with the residents the suggestion was made to have a beverage stand or a place to sit with refreshments outside of the actual monument. In planning the Bataille Monument I was thinking from the outset of having a snack bar—not outside of the monument, but as an equivalent element of the monument, integrated into it. The idea of "snack bar" is not, or not primarily, about offering food and drinks, but about offering an opportunity to talk, converse, spend time. At the same time the snack bar was a further anchor for the housing complex and the residents. For me it was clear that the snack bar would be run by residents of the housing complex. The snack bar is a door, a way into the monument, and simultaneously it is part of the monument. People often meet at monuments in cities to have something to drink and to talk. I also hoped the snack bar would exist for and be used by the Documenta 11 visitors as well as the residents. This was the case especially in the evenings. I thought it was nice that at 10 in the evening, when the monument and the snack bar "closed", the last guests to leave were usually from the housing complex. It was also nice that some people went to the snack bar almost every day, although they did not visit the other elements of the monument.

I always assumed that whoever drank a beer or ate a döner kebab at the snack bar would also use the rest of the monument. At first it was difficult to find someone to run the snack bar because those who expressed interest were afraid of the financial risk. My conditions were that there would be no rental fee for the stand and no water or electricity bills. The operators could keep all the money taken in by the snack bar. But they had to buy all the food and beverages and, most important, the snack bar had to be open twelve hours a day, every day of the week, just like the other elements of the monument. At first this scared the potential operators. In the end a solution was found, as was often the case in the complex, by having a discussion with the residents. The Kaban family decided to run the snack bar. The commitment and realism of this family played a major role in making the snack bar a meeting place and a place to converse. The friendliness and availability of the Kaban family (mother, father, two sons, grandmother, uncle, and aunt) often stood out. They operated the snack bar with Turkish and German refreshments absolutely independently. I was happy that they took on this task seriously. Every evening they cleaned up until 11 p.m. and prepared for the next day, when they reopened at 10 a.m. Although it didn't really matter to me, and the Kaban family also expressed no need for an exchange, I do not think the family had reason to regret the risk they took, financial or otherwise. On that I would like to say that I had not considered any additional shared systems of distributing risk and profits. But through this experience it could seriously be considered as a future option, as that would have increased participation by the housing complex.



Thomas Hirschhorn  
 « Bataille Monument », 2002 (Skulptur)  
 Documenta 11, Kassel, 2002  
 (photo : Werner Maschmann)  
 Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York



#### 4.e. TV studio

The aim of the "TV studio" was to create TV reports, approximately 10-minutes in length, from the Friedrich Wöhler housing complex and to broadcast them in the "open channel" of the city of Kassel. These TV reports would be produced and edited by the young people and other residents and workers on the ground, and then transmitted to the "open channel." The programs had to have something to do with Georges Bataille. They were supposed to report on the housing complex, its residents, a worker or a visitor to the Bataille Monument. We did not do any reports in the city. All programs were to be local, from the housing complex and about the complex and events happening here directly. I was very happy to see the accumulation of video cassettes and I am pleased that we were able to broadcast a new cassette every production day, that is, on 72 days (excluding Saturdays and Sundays). There were some very good reports, such as those in which the young people took advantage of the chance to talk about themselves, their problems, their views. And those of readings by Christophe Fiat, Jean-Charles Masséra, Manuel Joseph, Uwe Fleckner, and Marcus Steinweg. Not all of the reports expressed the same intensity, necessity, and urgency, but they all attempted to be based on the reality around us. Some of the reports were not discussed and assessed sufficiently in advance. Consequently, some of them, especially the interviews with visitors to the Bataille Monument, were lacking vibrancy and involvement. Sometimes we chose the easiest and fastest solution in order to expend the least amount of effort. This criticism, or self-criticism, does not only apply to the TV studio. I often no longer had sufficient energy; often the necessary energy was lacking to tackle more difficult subjects. Sometimes I was content with the absolute minimum, that is, the daily production of a cassette. Maybe the "TV studio," the most sophisticated element of the monument in terms of technology and organization, was lacking some assistance that would have served as a link between me and the residents who produced the reports. The Austrian Institute for Culture organized a seminar event for the first evening (June 6<sup>th</sup>). The somewhat artificial circumstances alone—that is, the fact that it was opening night and organized as an official event—already gave us an indication of the particular complexity and problems of the Bataille Monument. Over time the "TV studio" became an active meeting place owing to its geographic location in the housing complex, the proximity to the residents, and the Monument workers. For example, I recall the evenings with Reinhold and his wife Gudrun and friends, sitting in front of the TV studio. These situations made the TV studio into a pillar of the Bataille Monument, open to both visitors and residents alike, though the Documenta 11 visitors sat *inside*, in the TV studio, and the residents sat *outside*, in front of the studio!

#### 4.f. The Workshops

My motivation for the workshops was that I wanted the Bataille Monument to be lasting, that is, I wanted small events radiating out sporadically from the Bataille Monument to be held during the exhibition in the Friedrich-Wöhler housing complex. Something was to be created, produced—here and now—that had some relationship to Georges Bataille. My experience with the workshops was divided. On the one hand, the workshops I organized ahead of time—the workshops of Jean-Charles Massera, Manuel Joseph, and Marcus Steinweg—were wonderful and (I will come back to them later) and truly enriching, an output, evidence of the claim that the Bataille Monument can produce something. On the other hand, I had imagined there would be many more workshops, such as a housing complex run, a boxing event, small concerts with the residents, a capoeira-dance event, a conversation with the person working for the city of Kassel in charge of Joseph Beuys's Documenta VII "7000 Oaks" project. None of these workshops took place. This had to do with the lack of energy; I simply could not muster enough energy to organize the workshops. I was so busy with all the daily tasks of supervising and maintaining the Bataille Monument that there was no energy left over to organize and carry out workshops. I underestimated that without preparation or organizational assistance there were limits to my energy. The only workshop that took place that was not planned in advance was the Alternative Construction Trailer that docked onto the Bataille Monument for a week. After initial reservations by the building superintendent, the house management, and some residents, it was integrated very well. Here, too, I was surprised at the tolerance shown by a majority of the residents with respect to this non-approved action that was inspired only because of the Bataille Monument. The housing complex supported the construction trailer exhibition as well. The two debates by Jean-Charles Massera, who worked with the young people to perform texts he had written, led in the very beginning to intense and sophisticated discussion. Jean-Charles's understanding, humor, and ambition created a basis for group work that was important for the continued cohesion and for the seriousness of our project. The ten forged letters "Sculpture as a Bullfight" by Manuel Joseph and his goal of bringing them to the citizens of Kassel by distributing them throughout the city was wonderful. Thanks to the HNA daily newspaper, almost 10,000 copies of a letter was placed in mailboxes of Kassel households; this was repeated for each of the letters in ten different districts of the city. It was an important productive part of the Bataille Monument that Manuel Joseph thus spread poetry in a very concrete way, not with a goal in mind or aiming for a response. On the freestanding panel set up in the TV studio, where all of Manuel's letters were hung in German and translated into English and French, it was possible to follow the development of this workshop. I was happy that in the end all ten letters with translations filled the board. The workshop by Marcus Steinweg, his idea of text output, his understanding of the Bataille Monument as a machine, as a "Bataille Machine" was extraordinarily enriching. It was wonderful to see the exhibition panel on "The Ontological Cinema" that was set up in the library and continued to expand, and to realize that hundreds of people took copies of Marcus's texts with them. This satisfied Marcus's goal. Philosophy confronts reality, immediately and directly. Philosophy acts. Philosophy is necessary. This assertion was given form in the Bataille Monument. Also, the numerous, several-day visits that Marcus took to the housing complex and his confrontation with my work and with art, in its intensity, the severity of the questioning, and also in his life-affirming joy was a beautiful and very stimulating time for me. It was one of the most beautiful things I got out of the monument.



#### 4.g. Webcams

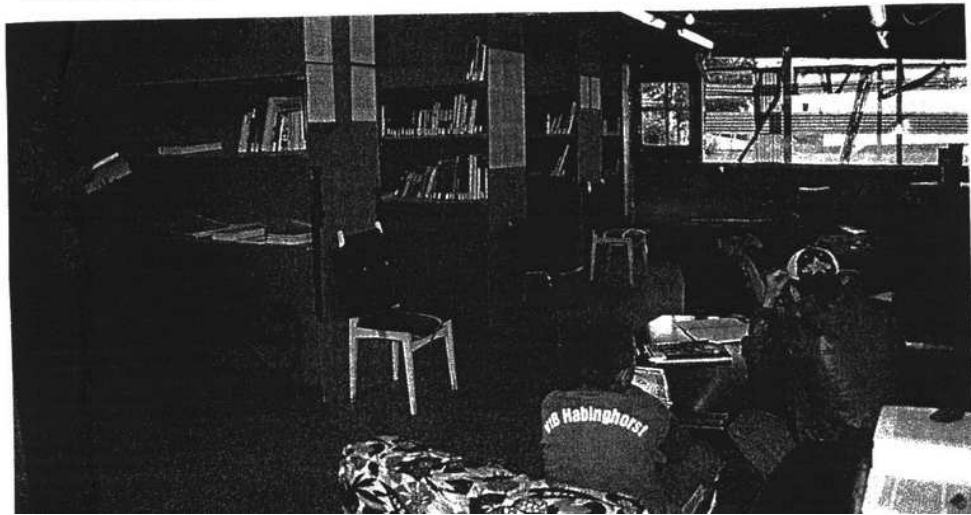
I was not pleased with the webcams, the element that intended to use the Internet to create a link to the world, to the non-visitors. I think Internet exists for the purpose of communication. Aside from any criticism as regards particular content, what I really like about the Internet in all its unspeakable wretchedness are the web cameras and the connected illusion of communication, of creating a feeling of simultaneity at another location. I like this idea, this headless, unreflected idea, of letting someone participate. That is what I wanted to achieve with the web cameras and the website: "www.bataillemonument.de". The form is important insofar as it says everything about the intention. And it was impossible for me to achieve or work out this form for reasons of finances, of Documenta 11 organization, and of artistic, democratic reasons relating to the platform. I want the absolute minimum—pure webcam, pure simultaneous communication. I wanted the 4 images from the 4 webcams to appear immediately when the website was opened; I wanted the screen to be divided into 4 sections like a surveillance camera and then with one click on a camera image it would be possible to look closer into that image. I wanted that to be possible without any text or any legend. I wanted that to be the only option: for people to be able to have a look into the Bataille Monument at the same time from Africa, Asia, America, or wherever. This was not possible because websites are designed uniformly by graphic designers, including curriculum vitae, project description, a couple photos, links, and maybe a web project. The only way to access the images from the four webcams was through the website, which became merely an illustration. Even worse, it became information instead of impossible communication through a web camera! Regarding other Internet projects (and I think only the web camera project was of any artistic interest precisely because it was not creative), should I have remained true to my intentions and eliminated it entirely? I think this was also the reason why I received the least amount of feedback, critique, or discussion regarding this element of the Bataille Monument. The webcams were supposed to be one element of the Bataille Monument, but they became information about it, in an economical small size. It did not help at all that we were constantly working, with the help of the Documenta 11 technical repair team, to keep all four cameras operating through to the last day.

#### 4.h. Sculpture

The "sculpture" element in the Bataille Monument was intended to isolate the object, the exterior, the visible, that which is generally referred to as a monument (but is in fact only the sculpture of the monument). The sculpture was supposed to be only the sculpture of the monument and not the monument itself. This was often not properly understood, or rather, it was understood in a very superficial and cursory manner. Yet it is precisely the questions that emerged from the misunderstanding that led to discussion about the sculpture. Once it was isolated from the monument, the sculpture took on the function of a meeting place, a playground or rather a romping ground as well as a place to sit, used mostly during the evening hours. The sculpture was a place within the urban space of the housing complex. Many viewers raised questions as to what statement it was making, what it intended to represent. There is no way to avoid this, even though its form developed by chance. Once it was decided that the main goal was to create a sculpture that posed the question of the monument, it no longer mattered what the sculpture looked like! I did not want to copy the human figure or the head as was done for the Spinoza Monument and the Deleuze Monument. I wanted to make a sculptural interpretation that resembled a tree stump, an organic form, without beginning or end. I wanted to make a sculpture in which the organic element would be taken up by a geometric one or in which the geometric element was the pedestal for the organic element and in that way at the same time prevented it from connecting with the truly organic part (the ground). The sculpture of wood, plastic, and cardboard, covered with packing tape survived in good condition for the duration of the exhibition, thanks to the repair team that each day retaped and retouched the places where it was torn or scraped. This repair service was necessary, because without the daily repairs, replacing and reinforcing parts of the sculpture as well as other elements of the Bataille Monument, this project would not have lasted through the entire exhibition period.

#### 5. The confrontation with and through the Bataille Monument

There was a considerable degree of discussion about the Bataille Monument. I was surprised since we had calculated that only about 4–5% of the visitors to the Documenta 11 platform 5 came to the Friedrich-Wöhler housing complex. I think there was so much discussion since this project was complex and problematic, beautiful and difficult. This carried over to the temporary visitors, and questions evolved in a way I had never experienced before. There was much misunderstanding and misinformation that contributed to the discussion. I think the circumstances, that the Bataille Monument was set up as an experience in public space throughout the duration of the exhibition, led to these consequences. Personally, I was constantly busy dealing with my project, which raised many new questions for me. It was very important to be on the ground in the housing complex the whole time. I drew that consequence from my experience with the Deleuze Monument. It is not important to be constantly present for the duration of the exhibition as an artist, communicator, or explainer to the audience; instead, I had to be there on-site as a



Thomas Hirschhorn  
« Bataille Monument », 2002 (Bibliothek)  
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superintendent for the housing complex and for the workers. On the one hand, I wanted to offer a sign that I care about my work and I won't leave the complex alone with my work. On the other hand it was necessary to solve all the everyday problems that arose—technical, organizational, and human. So I was there on the site the whole time except for 3-day absences each month (to visit my studio in Paris). I saw this as a noble task. The demand was incredibly high and so often the visitors did not understand that I was not there on site to impart any information or as a teacher, but to take care of electricity, photocopying, tools, etc. I appreciated this confrontation with the everyday reality of such a project. I also think the residents appreciated the fact that I dealt with everything myself although that led to my constant presence, which it what caused the misunderstanding. I was virtually ever-present, not because I am an "approachable artist", but because I wanted everything to work all the time. Another misunderstanding of my work was the "zoo" discussion. The "zoo" criticism is something that has continually arisen, also in other projects in public space. The criticism assumes that either the visitors to the housing complex find themselves in a zoo, or they feel like zoo tourists (whereby it is assumed that it is the residents that are on display). Or the criticism is that the visitors to the Monument are brought around as if they were on display. I think it is remarkable that obviously (or was it merely unspoken?) the question of who feels as if they are in the zoo was not clearly and definitively answered. Who is on display? Who is the tourist? It is also remarkable, and this is why I reject this "zoo" criticism, because this is a question of sensitivity. It is a matter of the individual sensitivity of the audience! It has to be possible in and with art to confront one's own sensitivity or to disregard it. For me it was very obvious that the "zoo" argument always came from a passive, theoretical perspective, since the Bataille Monument confronted theory with practice. My art was active, it attempted to assert a utopia. It risked accepting responsibility for something it could not be responsible for: the art, the Bataille Monument, trusted in its strength and refused to accept its weaknesses. The Bataille Monument did not want to include anyone in its passivity. That is why I cannot accept any sensitivities, and by the way it is important to note that this was never expressed by the residents or workers. Whenever the "zoo" criticism was expressed, it came from the targeted art audience. This is also why David Hammons's statement is so important. The "zoo" criticism does not seem autonomous to me. It is not free, because if the will to autonomy is absent, the conditions for freedom and responsibility are also lacking. This is not about individual sensitivities. The Bataille Monument project is about responsibility and freedom. The Bataille Monument is free of guilt and conscience. I wanted to overstep bounds with this project. I wanted to act freely with my Own. The Bataille Monument was an assertion: the assertion that an autonomous work of art has to struggle to be able to exist in all situations and in all environments!

#### 6. The Friedrich Wöhler Housing Complex

I was often asked how the project was received by the residents of the housing complex. I am certainly the last person who could answer this question! It seems obvious that an answer would involve a value judgment. That would mean that if the project was received well it was a success and if not, then it was a failure. The Bataille Monument project was not a matter of acceptance or rejection. I clearly wanted to work for a nonexclusive audience. This assertion first had to be made and endured before it is possible to discuss any conclusions to be drawn. The Bataille Monument was an experience; it was designed to be an experience but that also means that first the experience has to be made!

I was not bored for a single hour; I was confronted with people who live at the outskirts of a mid-sized German city. In many discussions I especially experienced the incredible strength of questioning through art. In the Friedrich Wöhler housing complex I perceived the importance of art, of philosophy, of poetry; even its necessity as something existential and fundamental. With respect to the Bataille Monument, I noticed that the tolerance, acceptance, confrontation, and participation grew with each day of the exhibition. This conviction grew stronger in everyday practice in the housing complex; the conviction that art can fight for and assert a space. It is the conviction that art can create a mental space, that it can penetrate into the brain. I was encouraged by this experience. Towards the end of the exhibition period a question arose that was expressed more and more often by visitors and some individuals involved in the project, but never by the workers. The question referred to the "afterwards," to what would happen after the project was dismantled. It was connected to the expressed or unspoken accusation that those involved would then fall into a "void." I always rejected this question, as it seemed to me to demonstrate that the point of the project had been missed entirely. This was because it was only through the strong confrontation and fruitful experience that we had that the social issue of social conscience was even triggered and suddenly brought to the foreground. All of a sudden that which I always considered an art project, a temporary art project (which was also intended to be liberating), was reduced to the social role that we defined for it daily, together with difficulties and setbacks. As the artist I was reduced to the social task, to the social responsibility that we created together through art in the first place. Does that mean that the artist does indeed assume the role of social worker? I continually rejected these attempts to view me as a social worker. I even developed an aversion to social work and social workers. I think only in extreme individual cases (such as Lothar Kannenberg) did they make their commitment and involvement into their career. I resisted the pressure to have to answer the question of "afterwards". Because I am not cynical! It would have been cynical to say: because a project might cause problems, questions and problematic situations, then I won't even try doing it!

I paid the workers for their assistance, as I briefly mentioned at the start, and I can explain why I think that is so important, and nevertheless the issue of payment, the whole money issue, remains unresolved for me, also with respect to this project. Of course for all workers it was first and foremost a way to earn money with and through the Bataille Monument. There is nothing wrong with that; that is reality. Except for the college and high school students, all other workers were unemployed. The problem and unresolved issue is that as soon as payment is involved, inevitably the working hours and achievement of the coworkers are observed. A "working relationship" develops. This working relationship has nothing to do with my art project. The lack of volunteer labor has the disadvantage that the question of giving (how much effort, how much work will I invest?) is linked to and



the division of labor and the distribution of work hours. I was overwhelmed each Monday when new groups were formed and work was divided up. I had to accept these egotistical comparisons among the workers, because I was partly responsible for them. Those were the unpleasant moments of the project. I am aware of the importance and strengths of the Bataille Monument and the fact that it set an example. I am less sure whether, in order to carry through such a project, this requires a headless, unbalanced, and often inconsistent artist (focussing only on the goal) such as myself. Many conflict situations in the housing complex could have been resolved more calmly, with more sensitivity and with less bungling.

#### 7. The Media

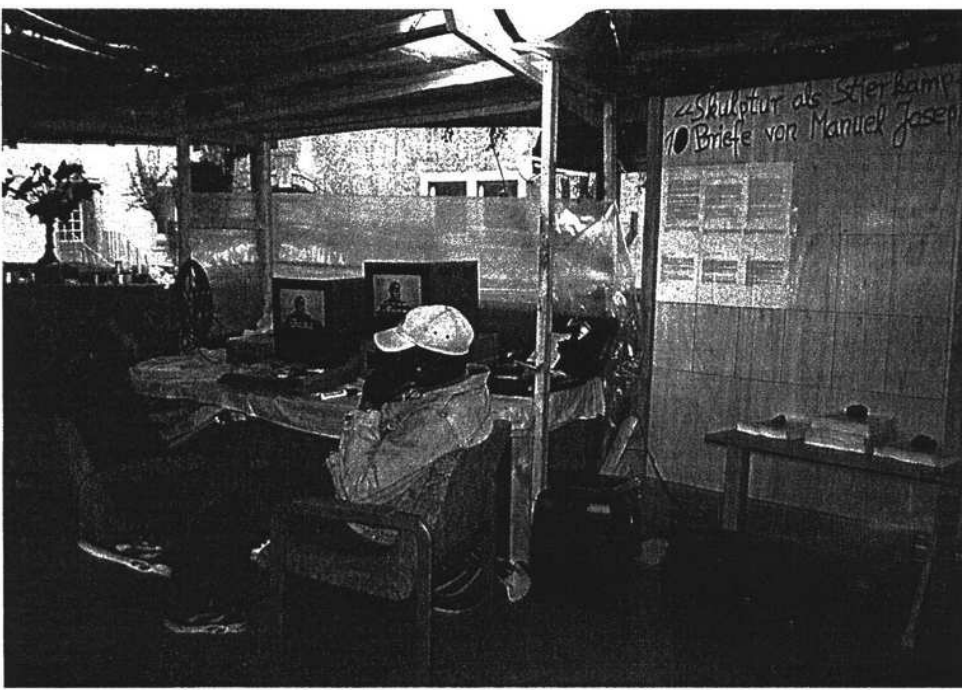
The Bataille Monument received what I considered a surprising amount of attention from the media. It was a very media-oriented project. I have no complaints about that, though I was also surprised at the superficial and lightweight reporting. The Bataille Monument with all the questions it raised was hardly reflected in its complexity. Both positive and negative reports usually focussed on the social environment, which seemed to be the easiest to explain. I noticed in the reporting and through some discussions with journalists how great the time pressure and sales pressure was with respect to "reader-friendly" writing and topic selection. This is why I also realize that the great media response has nothing to do with the artistic value of the project and a lot to do with its apparent communicability (public space, young people in a housing complex, artist on-site). Of course I did not discover this for the first time regarding this project. It is just that I noticed it again here, and it was stronger this time. I am not complaining because right at the beginning of the project I decided to accept all requests for interviews and all possible meetings with journalists! Without exception I planned to answer all questions posed by the media and to provide information about the Bataille Monument. I did this for the housing complex, the workers and all the helpers. I assumed that not everyone could come to the Bataille Monument because of time constraints. Therefore I thought it would be important to take advantage of all possible channels of communication to talk about the project. I was well aware that this was a matter of quantity, of media presence, and not refined analyses. I deliberately attempted to weigh this geographical disadvantage and balance it out through media presence. This did happen to a certain extent, with the mentioned shortcomings. In any case this media presence was assessed positively in the housing complex and I tried, as far as I was informed, in turn to tell the workers about the reports. I was often told, "We saw the Bataille Monument on television" or we read about it here or there, or my relatives or friends saw or heard us on television or the radio. This feedback was the result of openness toward the media. But I cannot imagine how the Bataille Monument would have lasted in the housing complex if there was no media coverage, no radio or TV reports, and no articles on it, and if as a result far fewer visitors had come. It was obvious that the extensive media reporting had encouraged many visitors to come to see the Bataille Monument despite the long way and amount of time it took. I think we paid the price of superficiality and repetition in the media analyses in order for the residents and workers to have the greatest possible exchange at the Monument itself.

#### 8. Taking down the Monument

I also wanted to be present when the project was taken apart, as a result of the experience I had with the Deleuze Monument. I did not want to leave the residents of the housing complex alone with the job of dismantling the project. What I did not foresee, however, was that it would only take three days to takedown. It took three days for all materials and all parts of the Bataille Monument to be taken down, or rather, torn down. Of course I had prepared the dismantling by arranging for trucks and garbage bins, and I also worked some additional residents into the taking-down schedule who had spoken to me during the exhibition. The only things that were kept and brought back to Paris or put in the Documenta archives in Kassel were the books and the texts and videos that were produced in the course of the exhibition. All hi-fi and video equipment, tools and the vehicles used by the shuttle service were raffled off to the workers, so everyone could take something home with them. I liked this method of distributing the materials without regard to the amount of work or time invested or the earnings of the individual workers, but instead as a matter of chance. I understood the actual process of dismantling or tearing down the project as a ritual. In no time at all, virtually all usable materials—the Plexiglas panes, wooden posts, boards, strings of lights, chairs, lamps—everything that was at all reusable was torn down and put in small storage piles at all the building entrances. Everything was then immediately taken inside by the non-working residents and put in the basement or elsewhere. It all went so fast that I had the impression it was all prepared in advance or was a ritual in which participation in taking away and transferring the materials marked the appropriation or winning back of something. Of course it could also be assumed that many of the families living in the Friedrich Wöhler housing complex were forced by their economic situation to reuse materials and not to let things go to waste. Nevertheless I remember these days as moments of a frenetic practice reclaiming according to unspoken rules. Was the reclaiming of materials a means of reclaiming the space that had been taken up and used and the reclaiming of the housing complex and their values? All of this happened without being directed in any way, and without sadness or aggression. I wanted to leave the space as it was when I first arrived, for the sake of the residents but also for the sake of the Bataille Monument, because I feel that the memories of the residents, visitors and workers, as well as my memories of the joint experience we all had is an essential part of the project, the notion of "monument". On the last evening, which was then earlier than planned since everything had been dismantled so quickly, I invited everyone who had helped out to one final dinner and noted that the transition back to the realities of daily life took place without nostalgia or sentimentality, but with friendly feelings. I found this life-affirming and it made me happy.

I am proud of the Friedrich Wöhler housing complex; I am proud of the workers and I am proud of myself. I am proud of the housing complex because they tolerated, used and put up with the project. I am proud of the workers because they supervised this project despite much doubt and many questions and because they helped the project take on a daily existence. And I am proud of myself for having carried it through to the end. The Bataille Monument was the most difficult and trying, most expensive, and most wonderful project I have ever done.





Thomas Hirschhorn  
 « Bataille Monument », 2002 (TV-Studio)  
 'Documenta 11', Kassel, 2002  
 (photo : Werner Maschmann)  
 Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York



Thomas Hirschhorn  
 « Bataille Monument », 2002 (Bibliothek)  
 'Documenta 11', Kassel, 2002  
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Thomas Hirschhorn  
 « Bataille Monument », 2002 (Bataille Ausstellung)  
 'Documenta 11', Kassel, 2002  
 (photo : Werner Maschmann)  
 Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York



Thomas Hirschhorn  
 « Bataille Monument », 2002 (TV-Studio)  
 'Documenta 11', Kassel, 2002  
 (photo : Werner Maschmann)  
 Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York



# A DAILY LECTURE

## WRITTEN BY MARCUS STEINWEG

**42th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 11th August 2013**  
**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PHILOSOPHER TODAY?**  
*Marcus Steinweg*

1. Jean-François Lyotard has defined intensity as an incommensurable energetic value.
2. This enables him to identify the "production of concepts" in a representative discourse with an "attenuation of intensities."
3. Intensity is what resists being channeled.
4. It defies the attempt to instrumentalize it as well as any *limited economy*.
5. Like Georges Bataille's heterogeneous, it marks the point of resistance that needs to be affirmed by a thinking that allows itself to be enraptured by it into experiences from which it cannot emerge unaltered.
6. Intensity drives thinking to excess, it renders thinking itself intense, headless and precipitate, precise and blind.
7. The dream moves to imagine an intense theory, intense concepts.
8. It is the dream of a language and a thinking that are no longer the antagonists of life and the libidinous intensities by slowing them down and stopping them as they confine what is incommensurable in them into concepts—thus the reproach that was, all too simplistically, leveled against Hegel.
9. Instead of being reproductive like the Owl of Minerva, this thinking is to be productive, hyperbolically turned toward an uncertain future without abdicating as thinking, without renouncing concepts and the rigor of their disposal in more or less consistent constellations.
10. The dream of intensity is the dream, itself intense, of a philosophy that would be different from the one that exhausts itself in reproductive commentary and professorial paraphrase.
11. The dream of entire generations of philosophers who attempt to wrest philosophy from its history, the forever recurring dream that threatens at any time to jolt thinking out of its academic slumber in order to lead it to its critical point.
12. Intensity disrupts historic filiation, destroys the great continuities to which people ascribe causal necessity, which they consolidate into unified blocks that construct coherencies and identities at the price of reductive simplifications in order to offer pedagogical assistance to the subject, promising it orientation by providing it with consistencies.
13. These consistencies always serve to reinforce the fabric of fact, just as the experience of intensity begins to unravel it.
14. Intensity offers resistance to the terror of the doctrines as well as the dictatorship of tradition.

# RESIDENTS OF THE DAY



KAREEN & ZARIAH