

# whitewall

## Dia Presents Thomas Hirschhorn's Gramsci Monument



### Thomas Hirschhorn

Gramsci Monument, 2013

Forest Houses, Bronx, New York

Courtesy Dia Art Foundation

Photo by Romain Lopez

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian political theorist of the early 20th-century, reemerges in Thomas Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument* this summer thanks to Dia. The fourth and final in his series of monuments, the *Gramsci Monument* recognizes Hirschhorn's belief that his, "love for Antonio Gramsci is the love of philosophy, the love of the infinitude of thought. It is a question of sharing this, affirming it, defending it, and giving it form."

The monument itself is an outdoor pavilion built by residents of Forest Houses. The location was chosen after two years of collaboration with the New York City Housing Authority and meetings at several different housing sites. Hirschhorn says of his early experiences with Forest Houses, "I was challenged and taken seriously. These were the real encounters between me and the Other—and one can easily understand that without these encounters, no decision regarding a possible location can be taken."

By involving local residents and using ordinary materials, the exhibition becomes a truly "public space." As with other projects, Hirschhorn chose the exhibition space "based on [his] love for a "non-exclusive audience," thus inviting an unexpected crowd to take part. Some of his works have been presented in more traditional galleries and museums, but Hirschhorn often uses spaces such as sidewalks and vacant lots.

The pavilion acts as an archive and library on the topic of Antonio Gramsci. In addition, the pavilion houses a theater, radio station and newspaper. With help from the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci in Rome, Casa Museo di Antonio Gramsci in Ghilarza, Italy, the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute and, of course, the local residents, each day the monument hosts a series of lectures and workshops.

The *Gramsci Monument's* involvement with the local residents takes it beyond the term "monument" or Gramsci's Marxist politics. Hirschhorn says, "My decision to do *Gramsci*

*Monument* does not come from an understanding of the philosopher Antonio Gramsci, rather it comes from my understanding of art and my belief that art can transform.”

The exhibition is open to the public through September 15, 2013.

By Sarah Bochicchio

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