

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

August 19th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

The Gramsci Monument-Newspaper is part of the "Gramsci Monument", an artwork by Thomas Hirschhorn, produced by Dia Art Foundation in co-operation with Erik Farmer and the Residents of Forest Houses

PRISON LETTER FROM 2013

Walter Adamson,

June 28, 2013

Hi. My name is _____ and I am a very passionate student of philosophy. Unfortunately, however, I am also serving a Life Sentence in California's state prison system. The reason I'm writing is, in all honesty, to ask if you might have any decent philosophy books laying around that you can send me.

Now I understand the strangeness of my request. I mean really, who writes to a total stranger and asks for books? Well the thing is this. As a prisoner I don't have a lot of money - crime really doesn't pay! - and philosophy books can be quite expensive, as I am sure you know. My girlfriend of twenty-four years recently said "Michael, why don't we get you the addresses to philosophers and you can write them and ask for their used books." Since she just sent me *The Cambridge History of Philosophy 1870-1945* I picked four names (alphabetically) and we're giving it a try. You are the first one I am writing. Therefore, that's how I came to writing this.

With all that said what I'd like to do is provide for you a short biography and an even shorter description of my transformation through philosophy. I will wrap it up by telling you what my goals are and how you can send me books.

I am 42 years old, a father and grandfather, and have been with my girlfriend (who is the children's mother) for twenty-four years. Sadly, though, I have been in prison for twenty years and seventeen of those years were spent in solitary confinement.

I came to prison in 1992 with a sentence of 9 years for burglary. In 1995, however, I was charged with the in-prison murder of a fellow prisoner. The prosecution charged that I killed the victim because he was a serial rapist. I went to trial acting as my own attorney (I know I know... bad idea) and lost. I received a sentence of Life without Parole.

Because of that murder, as well as some other in-prison incidents, I was transferred to the solitary confinement unit at Pelican Bay State Prison. I remained in isolation from roughly 1996 until 2011, when I was transferred to Donovan prison in San Diego for medical treatment. In 2010 I decided to "debrief" from the prison gang life and agreed to tell authorities everything I know in exchange for a transfer to a safe yard, somewhere. I'm currently waiting to learn where they are going to send me. It is a molasses like process.

Okay. So there is a brief overview of my case and subsequent confinement. But it's not anything like the whole story. You see Walter, when I came to prison I could hardly read or write. I was immature, egoistic, impulsive and pleasure-seeking. I wasn't a very good person. Once I found myself alone, isolated in a small windowless cell, I had two choices: let my essential self die (which would mean the death of my soul, the fragmentation of my psyche) or struggle to become something more than I was (in the Nietzschean sense). Unconsciously I chose the latter.

Without any consciousness of why I was doing what I was doing, I threw myself into learning to read and write. I read everything I could get my hands on and learned to write by mimicking the various writing styles of those books. I meandered through history, science, philosophy,

psychology, religion, literature, etc. Again and again I found myself pulled towards philosophy. I studied philosophy in a rather haphazard way, reading Plotinus before Plato, Aquinas before Augustine, Kant before Hume, but I eventually put it all together.

The neat part of this is that philosophy ended up changing my life. Through philosophy I began to critically examine my beliefs and the propaganda-type ideologies of the prison gangs which surrounded me. I had a complete cognitive reversal or reorientation happen in me. I started thinking about teaching other prisoners philosophy and writing. I'm going to create and run some philosophy classes for prisoners when I get to a regular prison yard, although I admit I could use some support. Additionally, I have written a number of essays and even a History of Philosophy book. My book covers the whole of Western Philosophy and reads like a philosophy for dummies.

With that said I have three basic (if somewhat vague) goals now. I want to become a philosopher, a teacher and a published author. (There is more to me, for example, I went back to school via correspondence, I have prosecuted over 20 civil rights cases (with 12 wins), but those are my three big goals). I am very goal oriented and know that I will make it happen, some day.

So I am asking you to send me a few of your used philosophy books, books you think would benefit me in general. I read everything. I'm currently studying Adorno. I will appreciate anything you send me.

The guidelines for sending books are reasonably easy. I'm allowed to receive up to five (5) books at a time. They can be new or used, soft or hardcover, the only strict rule is that you send them from the University. You can write "c/o Walter Adamson, Department of Philosophy" but that should be with the University address. (Officially the rule is books need to come from a vendor, publisher, institute, university, etc.). My address is: _____

Last but not least, if you have any questions whatsoever I would be happy to answer them. If you would be willing to mentor me a little on how to reach my goals I would be humbled and grateful.

No matter, I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

THE AUTHOR OF THIS LETTER APPROVED
THE USE OF IT FOR THE <<GRAMSCI
SCHOLAR LECTURE>> OF WALTER L.
ADAMSON ON AUGUST 17TH AT THE
<<GRAMSCI MONUMENT>>

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Bronx, NY 10456

Monday
Partly Cloudy



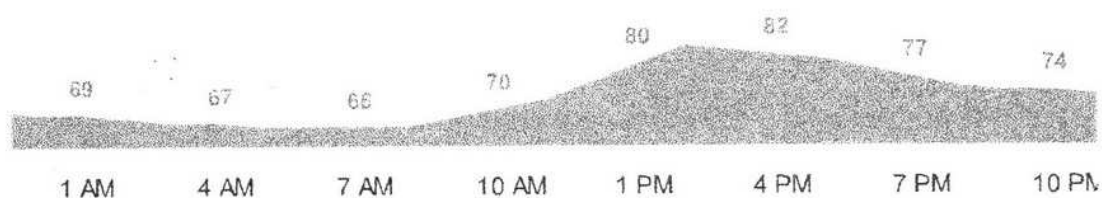
84 °F | °C

Precipitation: 10%

Humidity: 50%

Wind: 10 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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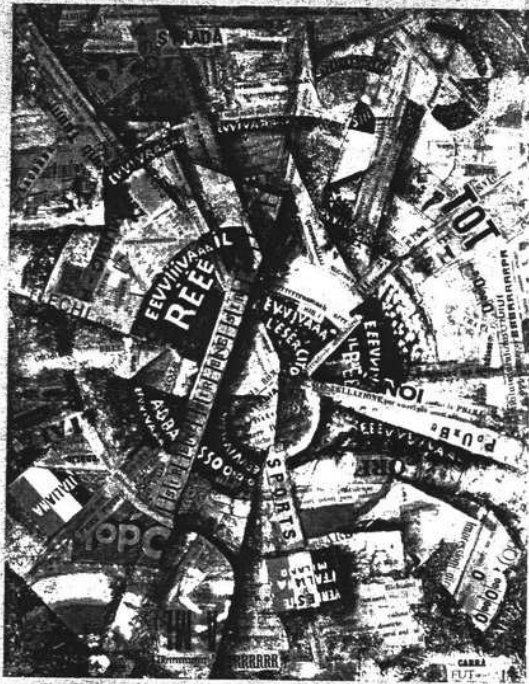
GRAMSCI SEMINAR BY WALTER L. ADAMSON ON AUGUST 17TH



**HEGEMONY
AND
REVOLUTION**
ANTONIO
GRAMSCI'S
POLITICAL
AND
CULTURAL
THEORY

WALTER L. ADAMSON

EMBATTLED AVANT-GARDES



MODERNISM'S RESISTANCE TO COMMODITY CULTURE IN EUROPE

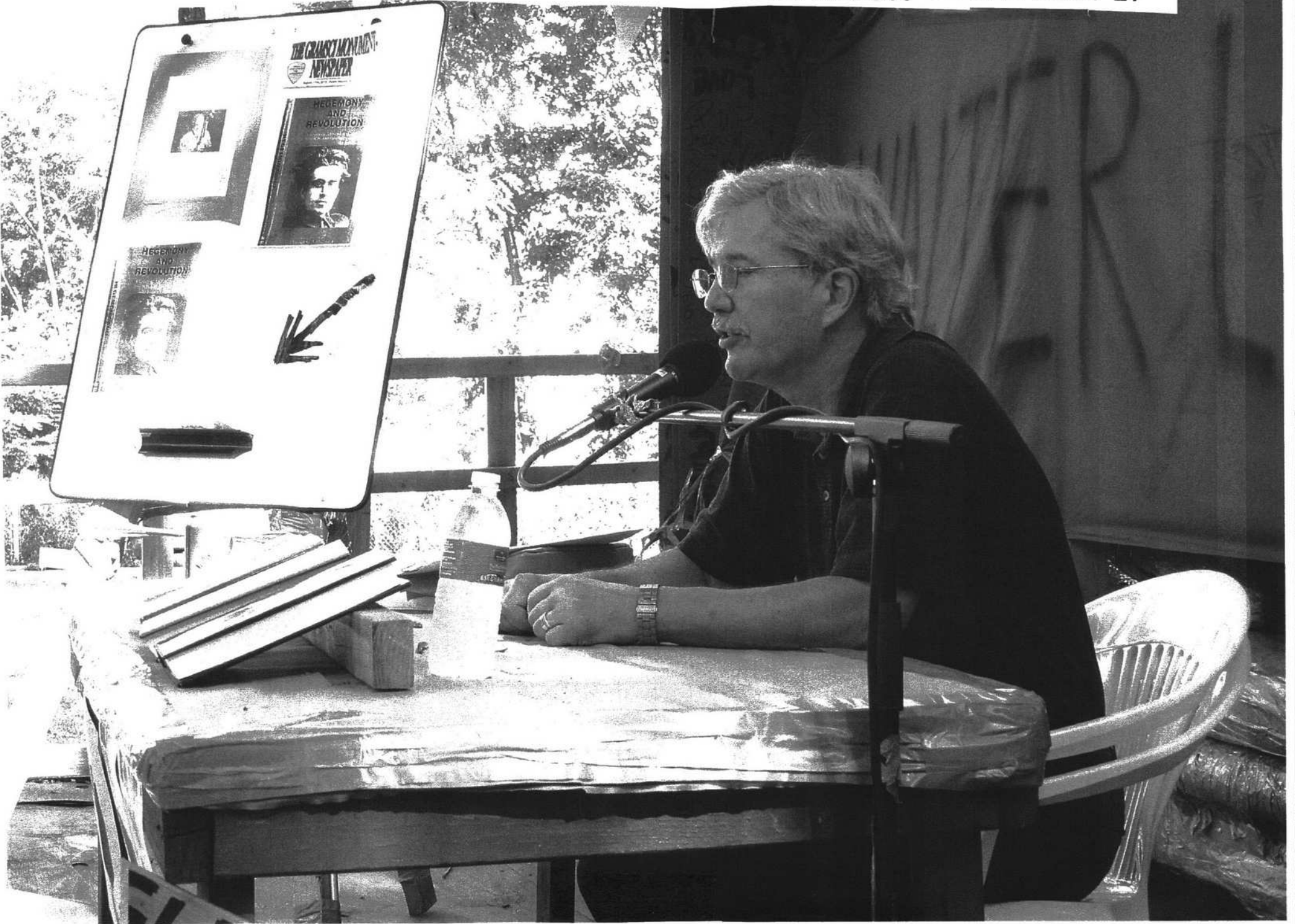
AVANT-GARDE FLORE

From Modernism to Fas



Walter L. Adamson

GRAMSCI SEMINAR BY WALTER L. ADAMSON ON AUGUST 17TH



A TEXT FROM THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

LETTER TO THE FRENCH MINISTER OF CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

Dear Sir,

The day before yesterday I received your letter dated May 2, 2012, announcing your intention to distinguish me as an officer in the French Order of Arts and Letters.

I thank you kindly and I am proud for my artwork. It makes me happy that the work I have been able to invent and develop here in France, the country where I live and work, has been taken into consideration by you, Sir, and by the French State that you represent.

However, it is my honor to impart to you my refusal to accept this distinction for reasons that I want to reveal to you:

During my youth in Switzerland in the canton of Grisons [Graubünden], I accepted, at my own will, the rank as officer in the Swiss army. Understanding later that I had chosen the wrong battlefield, I consequently refused to continue to serve the army, to belong to a corps or to an order.

It cost me four months in prison; then I left my native country to serve the only cause that seemed and still seems worth the trouble to me: Art. And it is here, in France—a country that has always been welcoming to me—that I was able to make my work emerge and it is today this country that brings you to honor me.

In no way do I want to be offensive, arrogant, or awkward, but I want only to stick to the line of conduct I chose at the time, that is, to not belong to an army or an order and not to be an officer.

What I want is to work, to fight for my mission in art—through my work—like a warrior, a warrior without a uniform and without medals.

I hope, Sir, that you understand the reasons for my refusal.

Please accept my humble respects.

Aubervilliers, May 9, 2012

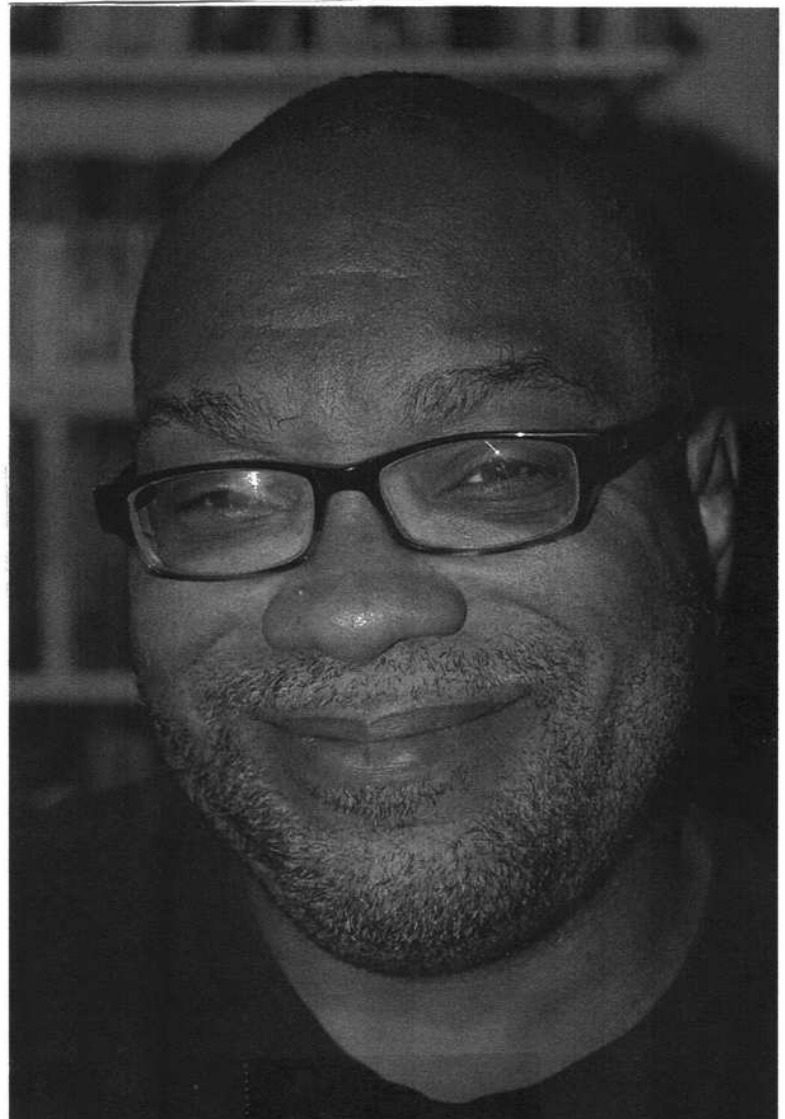
[Translated from French by Molly Stevens]

POEM WRITTEN BY FRED MOTEN

The Gramsci Monument

if the projects become a project from outside
then the projects been a project forever. held in
the projects we're the project they stole. we steal
the project back and try to give it back to them.
come on, come get some of this project. we protect
the project with our hands. the architect is in mining
and we dispossess him. we protect the project by handing.
let's bust the project up. let's love the project. can the
projects be loved? we love the projects. let's move
the projects. we project the projects. I'm just
projecting. the project's mine to give away. I'm not
in mining when I dispossess me. I'm just
a projection. projecting is just us, that's who we are,
that's who we be. we always be projecting. that's all
we have. we project the outside that's inside us.
we the outside that violates our block. we violate the auction
block experiment. we pirates of ourselves and others. we are
the friend of all. we are the cargo. are you my treasure?
you're all I need. are you my wish? come be my sunship. I dream the sails
of the project from the eastern shore. plywood sails the city
island past the enclave mirror so the bricks can fly.
at the fugitive bar the food be tasting good. kitchenette's
my cabin. flesh is burning in the hold. I love the way
you smell. your cry enjoys me. let me taste the way you think.
let's do this one more time. the project repeats me. I am repleat
with the project. your difference folds me in cadillac arms.
my oracle with sweets, be my confection engine. tell me
how to choose. tell me how to choose the project I have chosen.
are you the projects I choose? you are the project I choose.

FM, 8.14.13



A DAILY LECTURE BY MARCUS STEINWEG

50th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 18th August 2013
A NOTE ON BLINDNESS
Marcus Steinweg

1. We expect thinking to lead from darkness into light.
2. That is the self-conception of the enlightenment.
3. Whether in philosophy, in art, or in the sciences: the twentieth century has begun to complicate this imperialism of light (one name for this complication is *deconstruction*).
4. Not in order to slide into the esoteric and irrational but in order to initiate a thinking that accounts for the blindness of the subject with a more precise conception of enlightenment, subjectivity, and reason.
5. "If enlightenment does occur, it does so not through the establishment of a dictatorship of lucidity [...]," Peter Sloterdijk writes.¹
6. Neither of lucidity nor of opacity, since all knowledge remains after all dependent on ignorance as lucidity is dependent on opacity and meaning on its absence.
7. "It is not enough," Friedrich Nietzsche says in a fragment unpublished during his lifetime, "that you understand in what ignorance humans as well as animals live; you must also have and acquire the *will* to ignorance.
8. You need to grasp that without this kind of ignorance life itself would be impossible, that it is a condition under which alone the living thing can preserve itself and prosper: a great, firm dome of ignorance must encompass you."²
9. The philosopher of active forgetting turns out to be an apologist of active ignorance, which we must not rashly confuse with a reactive irrationalism.
10. Nietzsche seeks to contain the naïve traits of the religious belief in reason and knowledge; he insists that knowledge is not everything, that ignorance is not in opposition to it, that the subject must muster the willingness to integrate its blind components into an enlarged conception of itself.
11. An enlargement that conciliates it with its inconsistencies, with its ignorance as well as the limitations of its consciousness, with itself as a subject of blindness, before psychoanalysis finally studies the conception of a subject complemented by its unconscious and the attempt to describe it in its openness toward an entity that speaks within it as it speaks and decides for it before it can appropriate its own decisions.

¹ Peter Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism*, trans. Jamie Owen Daniel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), xxv–xxvi.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), 609.

WHAT'S GOING ON? FEED BACK

U: CULTURE

21

NICOLA ANGERAME
NEW YORK

LO STILE È QUELLO DI SEMPRE: RUDE, GREZZO, MA EFFICACE. TANTO LEGNO, NASTRO ADESIVO E SCRITTE A MANO. Mancano, fortunatamente, le terribili immagini di corpi martoriati, che ne hanno fatto un paladino dell'arte di denuncia: ma l'opera dedicata ad Antonio Gramsci, dice lui, è un monumento pacifista. Nella sua lunga carriera Thomas Hirschhorn (Berlino 1953, vive e lavora a Parigi) ha spesso usato i materiali poveri per catturare centinaia di immagini di guerra e di consumo in opere «site specific» di grande impatto psicologico. Nel Bronx, erige il suo «monumento» al fondatore de l'Unità: un'ampia struttura in legno, rialzata come una palafitta, che accoglie una scuola d'arte, una stazione radio, un bar, una redazione, una biblioteca, una sala computer, un sito web sempre aggiornato (www.gramsci-monument.com) e una sala conferenze in costante attività. Grazie alla collaborazione con la Fondazione Istituto Gramsci di Roma, la Casa Museo di Antonio Gramsci di Ghilarza e il John D. Calandra Italian American Institute di New York, il progetto propone anche una mostra che racconta la prigionia di Gramsci attraverso i suoi oggetti personali ed il film diretto nel 1977 da Lino Del Fra, *I giorni del carcere*.

Prodotto dalla Dia Art Foundation, il «monumento» durerà soltanto 77 giorni (fino al 15 settembre), ma in quel lasso di tempo tenterà di portare le idee dell'intellettuale sardo all'interno della comunità afroamericana e ispanica che vive nei 1.350 appartamenti di Forest Houses. Gramsci nel Bronx suona in un modo strano, ma interessante. Come è nato il progetto?

«Sono partito dall'idea di erigere dei monumenti in onore di persone che amo, come Spinoza, Deleuze, Bataille e ora Gramsci».

Nel Bronx, 400 mila persone vivono nei palazzi di edilizia pubblica, perché lei ha scelto proprio Forest Houses?

«Ho visitato 47 "Project" e parlato con moltissime persone, prima di trovare Erik Farmer, il presidente dell'associazione degli inquilini di Forest Houses, il quale mi ha dato la propria disponibilità. È molto seguito dalla gente che vive qui e ora dirige il progetto».

In un mese, lavorando con 17 residenti, ha costruito dal nulla il monumento che ora è in piena attività. Cosa si aspetta di ottenere?

«La mia missione è fare incontri, creare eventi, ripensare a Gramsci oggi e progettare un nuovo tipo di monumento. Siamo solo all'inizio».

Qual è la reazione degli abitanti?

«Stanno arrivando sempre più numerosi perché si sentono coinvolti e perché questo è il loro spazio; in tanti ci lavorano. È un progetto fatto con loro e per loro, e ogni giorno cresce un po' di più».

Lei fa un'arte impegnata e spesso scioccante. Quanto è importante la missione sociale del suo operare?

«In quanto artista sono interessato alla forma innanzi tutto. La mia prima domanda è stata: dove metterlo il monumento affinché la gente che vive qui si confronti con la sua presenza? Mi interessa la forma che assume l'opera quando reagisce con le persone che le vivono attorno».

Cosa crede che i residenti stiano comprendendo circa una figura così lontana, per loro, come Gramsci?

«Li colpisce il fatto che sia stato in prigione per così tanto tempo e che abbia detto cose che riguardano la loro vita quotidiana. Ma non voglio parlare in nome dei residenti. Provo a dare visibilità alle citazioni di Gramsci. Mi basta che conoscano la sua esistenza, o anche soltanto il suo nome o la sua data di nascita. È un buon inizio, poi vedremo».

Nel primo numero del Gramsci Monument Magazine, che ogni giorno approntate in una delle sale del monumento, lei sostiene che 9 americani su 10 sono prevenuti contro la parola «comunismo».

Come le pare che la avvertano, qui, gli abitanti di questi case a edilizia convenzionata, che nella totalità sono afroamericani o latino americani e non di rado vivono grazie all'assistenza sociale?

«La nostra stazione Radio Gramsci sta lanciando il dibattito. La parola «comunismo» crea negli Stati Uniti sentimenti di paura, ma qui non ne ho incontrata. Voglio insistere sul concetto e promuovere una discussione su ciò».

Nella sua semplicità e socialità, il suo «monumento» possiede diversi livelli di lettura: è un'opera d'arte, una struttura ricreativa, un centro culturale e un'affermazione politica.

«Mi piace che esso apra delle possibilità, siano anche soltanto quelle di bere un caffè o parlare con gli amici al Gramsci corner. Chi vuole, può seguire la creazione del nostro quotidiano, che offre informazioni su Mandela o altri grandi statuti, poesie e pensieri dei residenti, e notizie sugli eventi che si tengono e che riguardano i temi trattati da Gramsci».

Viviamo in un mondo «liquido», nel quale anche la funzione del monumento appare problematica. Lei sta tentando di ripensare l'idea e la funzione. «Volevo capire la ragione per cui oggi occorra

Gramsci? Vive nel Bronx

Parla Thomas Hirschhorn, autore del monumento al fondatore de l'Unità



Thomas Hirschhorn, «Gramsci Monument»
THE ARTIST / DIA ART FOUNDATION, NEW YORK

L'artista: «Mi basta che la gente conosca le sue citazioni, la sua esistenza. È un buon inizio, poi vedremo. La mia prima domanda è stata dove metterlo affinché le persone si confrontino con la sua presenza»

ancora dedicare un monumento a qualcuno». Gramsci non aveva legami precedenti con il Bronx. La sua presenza qui, secondo i canoni classici del monumento, non sarebbe giustificata. «Mi interessa quel che un monumento può produrre ogni giorno e non la celebrazione passiva di una figura. Per fare ciò, uso i pensieri che la presenza di Gramsci è capace di attivare. Questo monumento è evanescente, precario, durerà un'estate. In ogni caso, nessun monumento è eterno, ad un certo momento della sua storia smette di parlare».

Perché lei ama Gramsci?
«Per il suo lavoro, ma anche per la sua vita. Lo amo perché è stato un rivoluzionario, interessato alla politica attraverso un'ottica che non è quella del politico di professione. Era interessato all'arte e alla cultura e trovo affascinante la sua massima: «ogni essere umano è un intellettuale». Mi ricorda la frase di Joseph Beuys

«ogni essere umano è un artista». Ci sono molte ragioni per amare Gramsci».

Per lei quale aspetto è più importante?

«La sua visione ha qualcosa di operativo, che appare dalle note, dalle lettere o da pezzi di carta su cui appuntava i suoi pensieri. Per me essi fluttuano in uno spazio sospeso e mi permettono di pensare questo tempo così complicato e a volte ambiguo. Come artista, cerco di fissare dentro una forma concreta la dimensione poetica che la sua scrittura possiede».

Il lato poetico della politica, potremmo dire.

«Ma anche della realtà. Gramsci non cercò mai di evadere, non espose nulla neppure dall'analisi di se stesso come uomo. È molto lucido. Come lui, nel mio lavoro cerco di includere ogni parte della realtà, tentando di vederla nella sua forma di correlazione tra elementi complementari». Complementari come il Padiglione della Svizzera alla Biennale di Venezia, dove lei sta esponendo, e il Bronx. All'inaugurazione in tanti sono giunti da Manhattan. Lei è una specie di ponte tra mondi geograficamente vicini, ma lontanissimi.

È facile attirare le persone interessate all'arte e sono contenti di accoglierle, ma questo lavoro è per i residenti. Mi sento più a mio agio se ci sono poche persone, che arrivano dalle loro case qui intorno. Comunque i residenti sono stati contenti dell'incontro, hanno capito che quanto stiamo facendo insieme apre una dimensione nuova che va a vantaggio di Forest Houses».

Lei è un artista molto richiesto, ma stana qui tutta l'estate.

«Ogni giorno, da mattina a sera. Il progetto ha

un sottotitolo: «Presenza e produzione», significa che io sto nel progetto a produrre, con gli altri, per un tempo limitato».

Il mercato dell'arte è però molto lontano dal Bronx.

«Qui non è una questione di mercato. Personalmente non sono pro o contro. Il mio problema, in quanto artista, è quello di lavorare indipendentemente dal mercato dell'arte: il quale deve supportare gli artisti procurando loro i fondi per creare ciò che davvero desiderano e che ritengono giusto. Un discorso che diventa centrale quando si lavora su progetti di arte pubblica».

I suoi monumenti sono dedicati ai filosofi, lei si sente un intellettuale?

«Certo, nel nome di Gramsci. Concepisco me stesso come artista, ma il suo pensiero mi ha aiutato ad emanciparmi dalla settorialità dell'arte».

Il monumento a Gramsci vive anche attraverso un sito web.

«Ogni giorno cariciamo nuovi contenuti, immagini, dibattiti, articoli. Il sito permette di usare l'opera, ma non può sostituirsi ad essa».

La sua presenza all'interno del monumento ha il sapore di una socialità vecchio stile.

«Sono qui fisicamente per parlare con la gente e avere un rapporto reale con loro. Siamo molto in uno spazio pubblico e meno in social network. Ci servono una presenza fisica che mi pare un atto di resistenza rispetto all'abuso di internet».

Il suo prossimo progetto?

«Non so, davvero. Ora sono qui e sono molto felice di esserci».

WHAT'S GOING ON?

FEED BACK

ARTCITY (<http://artcity.com>)

How Do People Feel About the Gramsci Monument?

by Whitney Kimball and Will Brand (<http://artcity.com/author/whitney-kimball-and-will-brand/>) on August 16, 2013 (2013-08-16)



"Another monument to his monumental ego," Ken Johnson recently labelled (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/26/arts/design/a-visit-to-thomas-hirschhorn's-gramsci-monument.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) Thomas Hirschhorn's Gramsci Monument, a big wooden community center which looks like a set from Peter Pan, and occupies the Bronx's Forest Housing Projects through September. Rather than a towering chrome figurehead, the monument is an intellectual playground, a drastic improvement to the quality of life at Forest, and an overwhelmingly loving event.

Johnson's right to call out the mindset that an MFA qualifies a person to hand out life lessons to poor communities, usually provided there's a photo-op involved. (*Artforum's* (<http://artforum.com/diary/id=41969>) use of the "incongruously green" Forest Houses as the backdrop for Scene and Herd portraits of Barbara Gladstone, Sheena Wagstaff, and Dia Director Philippe Vergne (<http://artforum.com/search/search=%22Philippe%20Vergne%22>) stinks of phoniness). That reasonable skepticism, though, seems to have an awfully pessimistic effect on Ken Johnson: When Johnson sees a dozen people listening to a Latin band, he reports on the "ugly white plastic chairs" they're sitting on; When he discovers one person inside the library of social theory texts, he wishes there were two; When he sees children playing games in the makeshift computer lab, he complains that they're not researching the work of early 20th century Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci.

All that pessimism misses the point of both Gramsci and the monument. The purpose of combining a computer room, art studio, radio station, newspaper room, philosophy library, kiddie pool, snack bar, and an open mic stage, is to validate *any* group cultural experience. Copies of *People Magazine* sit across from a bookshelf of Marxist literature. A photo wall titled "Every book is important" shows kids holding up their favorite books, from textbooks to chicklit. It's a living embodiment of Gramsci's desire for proletariat liberation from cultural hegemony, and his credo: "Every human being is an intellectual."

That's a powerful statement when used by Hirschhorn, in that it plainly acknowledges that our culture is built around the opposite attitude. It's silently reinforced, every other day of the year, simply through the absence of spaces like this one.

So Gramsci's success really depends on how the residents of Forest felt about it. Here's what I heard from a handful of people there last Sunday.

A young Latino man in his twenties doesn't want me to give his name, but tells me he grew up in the Bronx, works a cleaning job at the monument, and loves it. While we were talking, he was doodling on a piece of paper towel.

Oh...[Laughs] That's kinda personal.

[Laughs] Okay, then second favorite...

The kids, basically. That's about it. Everybody's having fun.

Do you think any of these kinds of activities with the kids will continue after the monument goes down?

Honestly, from living in the Bronx almost all my life, I don't think it's gonna happen. Kids get occupied too fast, they get into something. I don't think it's gonna last. Maybe if they did it all year long to keep it a fresh memory of what they're doing. When this is gone...it ain't gonna be the same, though.



Phil Beder works the radio station. He's a white dude, in a wheelchair, and a longtime friend of Hirschhorn. He's from Brooklyn. Hirschhorn asked him to run Gramsci radio since he has a background in working for the extremely left-wing station WBAI.

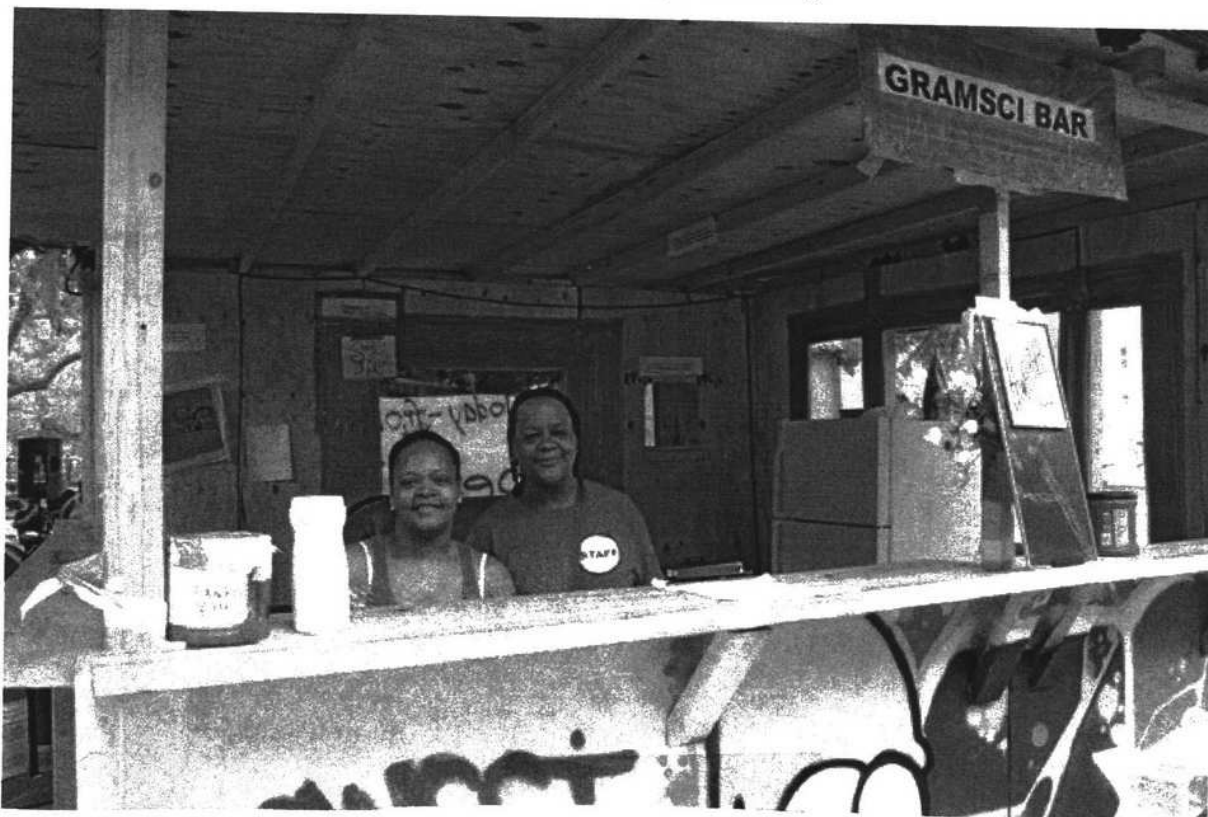
I've heard some backlash on Twitter about the monument— people who haven't been here have been saying that it's condescending, this is some successful white artist trying to impart his philosophy on people...How do you think people feel about this as a community?

Well, I'll tell you this: five years ago, Thomas did a presentation at Queensboro Community College where he was thinking of collaborating with an art professor over there. During his presentation, he showed the Spinoza Festival, which was very much like this. He went into a public housing in Amsterdam and did the Spinoza Monument, very much the same format. This teacher in the audience pokes this kid and says "You were gonna ask him a question." And the kid goes "No, that's okay." And she goes "C'mon, c'mon you were gonna ask him a question." And so he gets up a does this speil. A black kid. He said how can you come into a neighborhood and talk down to people, and Thomas says, no, I was invited in.

This went on, and Thomas was sort of frustrated. Basically, all Thomas should have said was "You had to be there." There was no resistance from the community. If you weren't there, and you had that point of view... you had to be there. It wasn't what you think.

This time, he went to about fifty projects, and basically, he chose the right place. Eric Farmer, the head of the Tenant's Association said "Yeah, who was Gramsci, why should I be interested in this?" and stuck his nose into it. The people who are [criticizing this project from] far away need to talk to the people in the community. Does everybody here get

Gramsci? I don't know. Does everybody here get the concept that this is not a social project? No, probably not. Some people view it as a program for their kids. So like any artwork— for me, art is something you look at, and you take what you want from it. That, to me, is what this project is. I'm not a connoisseur of contemporary art, but *this is art*. It is ugly. The roof leaks, god damn it. But it works as a concept, as a thing.



Janet, a middle-aged African American woman and Forest resident, is working the burger and hot dog counter. She built the monument with thirteen men, all Forest residents.

How do you think the community's reacted to this over the course of the—

It's beautiful. The community loves it. They don't even want it to leave.

Do you think they'll try to set up more programs for kids after this is gone?

They already have programs for kids, the South Bronx Community Center, right down the block.

Do you think they'll try to keep doing something like this, though?

If somebody else comes to do another project, and they allowed them to do it here. Since everybody got along with this one.

Some people who aren't from Forest are a little more suspicious about the intentions with this project. People are saying 'Who is this artist to bring this into the community, who does he think he is...'

[Her face drops]. Who does he think he is? He probably wanted to try something new and see how it works for the community. I think it was a beautiful idea for him to do something like that, I think it's terrific. Anybody who has a mind like that, who goes around the world and does something for people...I think it's beautiful. It's something somebody is doing for us, making us feel better within ourselves. Making everybody in the community happy, I think it's wonderful.



Shirl Moody is selling jewelry on a table off to the side of the monument. She lived in Forest for twenty-four years.

Can I ask you a few questions?

If you promise to take a look at my jewelry.

Sure. What do you think of the monument?

I think this is a great thing that he did. He opened up a lot of doors, he gave a lot of jobs and opportunities. And I think this is one of the best things that has ever happened within Forest and for Forest.

So you don't think there's any criticism within the community?

None. There can't be, he came with opportunity, he didn't come asking for anything. He came giving. He gave back to the South Bronx, and thank God for him...It's just so overwhelming— each part just says 'love' to the neighborhood. [Hirschhorn categorizes Gramsci's philosophy as the intersection of "Love" and "Politics," which he's painted on two basketball hoops, each nailed to converging branches of the same tree.]

I'd hope that he wouldn't take it down. I can't understand why they would stop it. I wish they had a way they could run a program through the winter. I'm hoping they get a petition and have it signed. This is a great getaway, keeps a lot of violence from over here, there hasn't been that much shooting...So my guns go up to him for this. It's a great thing.

Cash, middle-aged African American guy, I think he's a father, is watching singer/songwriter Miss Iry, Shirl's sister, do open mic. She's promoting her new album.

How do people feel about this?

The kids love it. They came out here, did something positive for the kids, it keeps them out of trouble. Instead of just going out to a regular park, in summertime, they have something they can really look forward to. And they really look forward to coming out here. And the [restaurant]— the prices are so sweet. Can't really get better than that. [Two dollar burgers and hot dogs]. The open mic...everybody has a chance to do something. I like it. I like it.

So you don't think there's any backlash from the community? Nobody had hard feelings?

The way I see it is they provided fifty jobs to the community, for one. For two, everybody looks forward to coming here. If it were up to me, I would have this every year.



Off to the side, an older Hispanic man sits on a bench next to a young 20s Hispanic woman. Both prefer to remain anonymous.

How do you feel about this?

Man: Well it's only going to be up for a little while, so what's the point. It's going to come down, soon...now, it's gonna be gone forever, it's gonna be memories. So it doesn't make no sense at all.

So you think overall it's a good thing and it should come back?

Oh, yes, it should come back because it's not bad. But then again, you should hire more Puerto Ricans and Cubans [Laughs]

I heard about that.

[Hispanics were upset that African Americans got almost all the jobs at the monument, supposedly due to the fact that the head of the Tenant's Association is African American. But that was straightened out.]

Woman: It should be something that's kept all year long. It keeps the kids busy. There's a cycle that keeps going on in here, in this area, in South Bronx. Violence, violence...if you teach kids other things besides violence, they'll get into other things, their mind will open up. As long as you keep them inside the box, it will never change. This would be a good distraction.

Do you think that the violence has gone down this summer?

Together: Yes, yes, it has.

Girl: It kept people busy, people out of trouble. And focused on something positive instead of negative. You could tell there was a change.



An early-twenties African American guy is playing cards with his friends near the restaurant. He seems reluctant to talk. He's a security guard for the monument, and watches it at night.

Are there ever problems?

No, never any problems.

Do you think this is a good project for the community?

Yeah, it's kept a lot of people from acting crazy, it's stopped a lot of trouble. They had something for the kids to do, instead of being out here early morning doing nothing.

Like violence, drugs...

Yeah. They got somewhere to come play, eat, have fun, they get to do shows, put on their own shows. There's a lot of activity.

Do you know when they proposed the project, was anybody suspicious of this?

A lot of people thought it wasn't gonna last, or it wasn't going to be finished.

Oh, it wasn't going to be built?

Yeah.

But the idea for the project— were people opposed to it?

Nah— some people were, some people were really enthusiastic about it. They really wanted to see what the outcome would be.

Thomas Hirschhorn's in the art room making a new "Resident of the Day" sign out of cardboard and duct tape. He speaks with a heavy Swiss accent.

Have you had any struggle with the community, getting this project built?

No. No struggle. No no.

When you started this, were people suspicious of the project at all...

No, not suspicious. Perhaps skeptical, doubting...passive. But you know, you cannot do this kind of project without the agreement of the people here. That's why the field trips are so important— I was here ten times before trying to meet people, that's how I met Eric Farmer, the resident President who invited me to do it here. That's why it is here, actually.

Did he have the consensus of the whole community before it was built?

No, not the whole community. But first of all [he's] one person who has 'street credit.' I call it a person with street credit, but who is the key figure, who knows the people, who lives here, who can speak in the words of the residents. He is the resident President, so he was the one who agreed that I do it here with him, with the help of the residents— so there is no struggle.

Is it important to you that people learn about Gramsci when they're here, or is that secondary to the whole project?

It's not secondary, but it's only one issue, or one problem, or one offer, or one of the lights, to know about Gramsci. The other is make encounters, to create events, and to establish a new meaning of the term 'monument.' To me, somebody who hangs around at the bar every day, or only once, is also enjoying the monument. It's about Gramsci for me, because this gives me the power, thinking I can do it— for him, for the love of his work, for the love of his life, and the price he was ready to pay. So this gives me the power to do his work.

I'm not a missionary of Antonio Gramsci. By definition, as an artist. This is why to give the ideas of Gramsci is of course one the goals but not the main goal.

Uh...can I ask you what you're doing?

Yeah, I mean [Laughs] I started doing the board of— how do you say it— the panel of the Residents of the Day. And

Can I take a photo?

[Laughs, goofily] You want the artist-at-work, huh? Okay, here is the artist-at-work...



An excerpt of philosopher Marcus Steinweg, who's now onstage giving a guest lecture

...Philosophy is the same. Philosophy is of course not the problem to avoid l'art pour l'art aestheticism, it's not aestheticism, but it's idealism. I would say what aestheticism is in art, is idealism in thinking. Now, the crucial point, of course, is not to stop here, with this, let's say, critical gesture—critical concerning the established— but also to interrogate the established itself. Not simply jumping from a [knife?] concept of idealism, to a [knife?] concept of substituting, a [knife?] concept of idealism for a [knife?] concept of positivism...positivism, simply, this is a [Latin?] work.....



People keep telling me to talk to Susie, Eric Farmer's mother, whom I gather is kind of a community matriarch. She's smoking a cigarette with fellow Forest resident Christine Allen, across from a small, well-tended garden.

Susie: Sundays are my favorite days; listen to different people who come by, who wanna say something, they wanna dance, they just wanna express themselves. I enjoy it. Everybody else does. We make sure we're out here on Sundays. I'm here every day, but I enjoy Sundays.

I enjoy some of the lectures, but some of them are so complicated, I can't put it together. So sometimes I listen to him, and sometimes I get drowsy.

When people were concerned at first, what are some of the things they were saying?

What is that, that looks horrible—you know, little comments—but for the most part people are pleased with it.

I do not allow disrespect or obscene language, here, in particular. I am not gonna hear that from the little ones down, to the little ones up.

Do you think this could happen again?

No, unfortunately, I wish it could happen again. Thomas was planning this for maybe seven to ten years. He was coming back and forth for over seven years trying to find a place where he could do it.

Everybody says it was Eric's doing, to see that we had it here. Because he said "Okay, let's give it a try." I'm sure that if they said no, they would have had to come up with something to explain to him. "Why can't we have it here? What harm is it going to do?"

Christine: And he took good care of this garden—very nice.

The garden wasn't here before?

Susie: It was here, but it wasn't taken care of like it should be because the lady who has it can't really do it like she needs to. So Thomas comes over, he cleaned it, he took care of it. Some of it was already there, but it was so high, nobody could enjoy it.

Christine: He did an *excellent* job. [Claps]

Susie: He said he would do it an hour every day, and first thing in the morning, every day, that's what he does.

Have you heard from any other projects why they weren't going to have it?

No, I didn't talk to any of them about that; Eric just said they said "no" off the bat, they didn't really listen to see what it was going to be about, so they didn't know.

A lot of people up there have said they're gonna cry when it's down. I dunno if I'm gonna cry, but I'm gonna miss it a lot. The kids are gonna miss it because now they're gonna have nothing to do during the summer.

Christine: Myself, I'm glad to be a tenant here, thankful to them for having this here for us. Especially Eric and Clyde. [Before the monument], I used to be sitting up there laying in my bed. Now I'm not laying in my bed...this is really, this is awesome. I really love this.

Susie: And this is art. I never realized that art...it really changed my idea of what art could be. Art could be anything. I never thought you could make a career out of this.

There's a little boy who lives here, who saw this and said he wants to be an artist. I told him "let your parents know that this is what you want and see if they can get you into an art school." You give him something to do, and he sits there, and he makes sure he does it. He's not gonna stop until he's finished. He takes his time, and he's patient, and everything. And you can see in him that this is something at a young age that he really wants to do.

RESIDENT OF THE DAY



MS. SAUNDRA