

ISSUES

P U B L I C A R T

THE PUBLIC ART FUND INC.

WINTER/SPRING 1989



Board of Directors

Susan K. Freedman*
Jenny Dixon
Barbara Fife
Lloyd Frank
Ronay Menschel
Kenneth Seelig

Advisory Board

Vito Acconci*
Alice Aycock
Kent Barwick
Laurie Beckelman
Jane Dickson*
Gary Garrels*
Richard Haas
Barbara Hoffman
Kellie Jones*
Justen Ladda*

*Project Committee

Staff

Susan K. Freedman, President
Lyn Freeman, Project Director
Elizabeth Luther, Director of Development
Emily Dominianni, Publicity Director/Office Manager



ART AND THE HOMELESS

"Art and the Homeless" is the tenth issue of the Public Art Fund Newsletter, a publication initiated in 1982 to explore various topics of interest in the field of public art. In 1987, artist Krzysztof Wodiczko approached us with a proposal for "Homeless Vehicle." While we were unable to give financial support to Wodiczko's proposal, we felt it would be valuable to examine and present the various responses of the art community to the homeless crisis, particularly in light of the increasingly urgent nature and immense proportions of the problem.

I want to thank Patricia Phillips, instructor in the Architecture and Design Criticism Program of Parsons School of Design, along with Laura Lombardo and Rachel Stettler, two students from the program, for agreeing to be guest editors of this issue of our newsletter. Thanks also go to two Public Art Fund interns, Sarah Lee and Melanie Neilson. Their research for this newsletter, and for the symposium on the same topic, was invaluable.

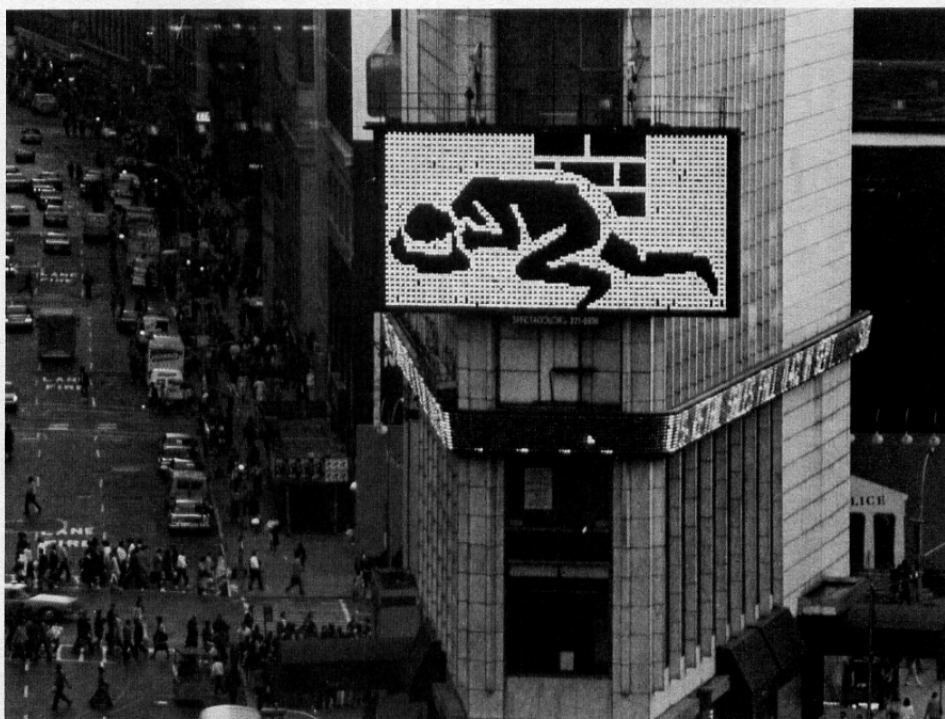
The editors tackled the vast amount of information and visual material we had received at the Public Art Fund, and did a great deal of research into the work of other artists around the country. They have put together a group of essays and images that effectively presents the

wide range of responses to the problem, from performances and posters designed to increase awareness and encourage political action, to structures designed specifically for the homeless.

Since its founding in 1977, the Public Art Fund has worked to bring artists, architects, and communities together in the creation of a more livable and humane urban environment. It seems a logical extension of our activities to explore creative approaches to the homeless crisis: approaches that may help to increase public awareness of the enormity and urgency of the homeless problem; approaches that may incite more people to action on behalf of the homeless; approaches that may provide livable and affordable housing for the homeless; approaches that may make the day to day realities of life on the street more bearable for the homeless.

We realize that meeting the goal of a livable and humane urban environment depends in large part on the *elimination* of the homeless problem. We hope, however, that ideas such as those examined in this newsletter, no matter how abstract or provisional they may be as solutions, will help to bring us closer to this goal.

Susan K. Freedman
President



Anton van Dalen, . . . because there was no room for them in the inn, 1987, Spectacolor lightboard, One Times Square, New York City, computer animation, photo © Spectacolor

The following passages are excerpts from a panel discussion called *Art and the Homeless* that took place on May 10, 1988, and was co-sponsored by the Public Art Fund and the Parsons School of Design Graduate Program in Architecture and Design Criticism. The point of the discussion was to explore the ways artists could make unique contributions to solve, alleviate, or draw attention to homelessness.

Each panelist was asked to make a brief presentation of his or her ideas, followed by discussion and audience participation. The editors have shifted the order of the presentations for the newsletter in an effort to make the exchanges that took place that evening more meaningful to the reader.

Following the transcript is an essay by Nancy Mandel, an audience member and writer who wanted to respond to questions she believed were not discussed sufficiently or even raised on the evening of the panel.

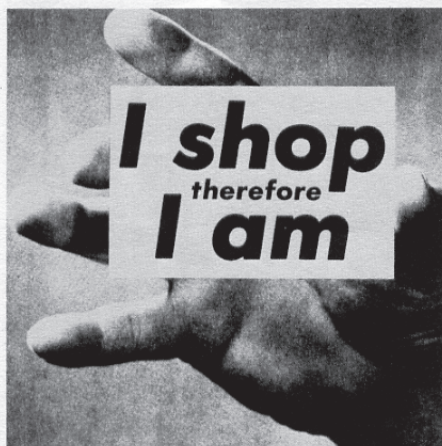
The editors would like to thank all the participants for their time and effort.

ART AND THE HOMELESS INTRODUCTION TO THE SYMPOSIUM

There is no doubt that homelessness has become one of the most pressing problems facing American society. As the numbers of homeless people increase to unprecedented proportions, so too has media coverage of their plight. We are inundated with debates about the social, political, psychological and cultural causes of homelessness. Reporting in a May, 1986 issue of *Science* magazine, Constance Holden wrote [the homeless] "have been studied, followed, tested, interviewed, photographed, and human-interest storied . . . more than any population of comparable size almost anywhere." In 1988, homeless people have appeared on *Oprah* and *Geraldo*; articles appear almost daily in *The New York Times*.

The effect of this coverage is shown in a society increasingly divided against itself: the media, while trying to raise our consciousness about the homeless, have allowed us the luxury of watching their lives go by from the comfort of our own homes. And as we have apprehended the image, we have let go of the reality.

In addressing a panel that intends to discuss



Susan Rothenberg, *Beggar*, 1982, 39½" x 50½", oil on canvas photo © Dorothy Zeidman (courtesy Sperone Westwater)

how homelessness relates to art and artists, it seems necessary to acknowledge that artists also deal in images. One of the questions, then, is whether or not art can transform a public crisis into a psychological reality in a way that the media is incapable of doing. What is the next step after consciousness-raising? Can artists combat what seems to be a cultural resignation to homelessness? Is the artist who wants to deal with this, or any, political issue in his or her work fighting the problem, not only alone, but in isolation?

Some artists, such as New York-based Martha Rosler, are concerned that artists, directly or indirectly, contribute to the problem of homelessness. Artists, claims Rosler, are no longer willing to live on the margins of society, as they have historically. With New York City the center of an inflated art market, more artists' studios, galleries, and museums exist than ever before. But, Rosler writes, "artists, by serving as urban pioneers . . . inadvertently 'destroy' poor, working-class and other marginal neighborhoods." How then, can artists deal with the duplicity of their roles—as commentators on, and occasionally agents in, the process of gentrification?

Can art force us to clarify our thinking concerning the meaning of homelessness? Artists like Barbara Kruger remind us that our most mindless actions, shopping and consuming, reflect an 'ideology of togetherness' that excludes homeless people. Kruger makes us aware of our rituals and self-definitions, while pointing out the ways we brush aside others who we think differ from ourselves in some fundamental way.

Painter Susan Rothenberg shows another

way we look at the homeless: as stereotypes. In a painting called *Beggar* she offers us not a whole person but a fragile, ghost-like arm with a cup at the end. Rothenberg reminds us that when we approach the beggar we avert our eyes—the beggar is someone who is to be ignored rather than faced. While it is certainly not true that all homeless people are beggars, this is how we often think of them, this is the image that we seem to be stuck with.

Do we discriminate against the person who has no place to live just by calling him or her homeless? Why do we use this particular term, rather than ill-housed, unhoused, or simply poor? Does the word homeless contribute to an 'us and them' mentality because home has greater psychological implications than the word house or shelter? Home implies a nest, stability, control over one's life and circumstances. Are these the qualities that make an unhoused man or woman different from a housed one? Can art make a unique contribution by making us change that image? What else, if anything, can art and artists do?

Laura Lombardo

EXCERPTS FROM ART AND THE HOMELESS SYMPOSIUM

PAUL GORMAN is the Vice-President for Public Affairs at the Cathedral of St. John The Divine and he organized the demonstrations against housing injustice held in New York last December. He is a talk show host for WBAI.

ISSUES

PUBLIC ART

This opportunity to be reflective with a group of artists is something rare for me and something of a journey. These notes that I am about to share with you are almost as fresh to me as they are to you. They are prepared in the spirit of sketches. I am taking the artist's risk of letting thoughts and feelings come spontaneously out of my heart. Many of you artists work alone; these notes are a gesture of solidarity—a kind of abstract expressionism.

As I look up and 'behold,' I find myself present in this moment. I am taking a chance to share a political organizer's ideas of how art or artistry have something to do with what we often understand as just a political issue. Here we are. Are we really here? Are we really present? Are we alive, compassionate, curious?

Presence has a mindfulness that artists have the unique ability to awaken, and by so doing release feelings of compassion that otherwise lie dormant. How can we better awaken our general sense of presence in this city? We who walk around the streets in the haze of our self-absorbed minds. I assume that you have already heard by now or come in knowing that we are nowhere near understanding what radical visions, what transformations of consciousness will be required to redress the neglect that has caused the denial—to a brother or a sister—of something so sweet and so simple as a home. We have allowed some members of our family to be homeless, and faceless, and nameless, and seen as other. How can artists reclaim the ancient art of portraiture, but portraiture newly understood? We must all learn to look at one another—a habit that artists have learned to explore.

This has everything to do with homelessness. Artists know how, not only to glance, but to look more steadily. Part of being an artist is coming into contact with the intimate creativity of others. Discovering and rejoicing in creativity as a universality. What could this have to do with our divided civic consciousness? How can this vision of universality awaken that innate instinct of generosity? Do they teach that at art schools anymore? You artists may have the capacity to recognize that creativity a little more quickly and sensitively than others. And that act of recognition and affirmation empowers at the deepest levels.

I can tell you as someone who has been working with this, that we are up against considerable forces on this issue. This idea of portraiture—of the nameless naming themselves—as a cultivation of universality is a concrete tactic towards the idea of housing for justice. They are attributes of the artist's vocation. Don't underestimate them. Don't think that those of us involved in this issue day to day don't need your vision. **We must cultivate the art of civil attention, the art of hospitality, the art of generosity. These are the fundamental attributes of home. There is an art that awakens these qualities and it has less to do with the subject itself than those qualities that the artist can stimulate.**

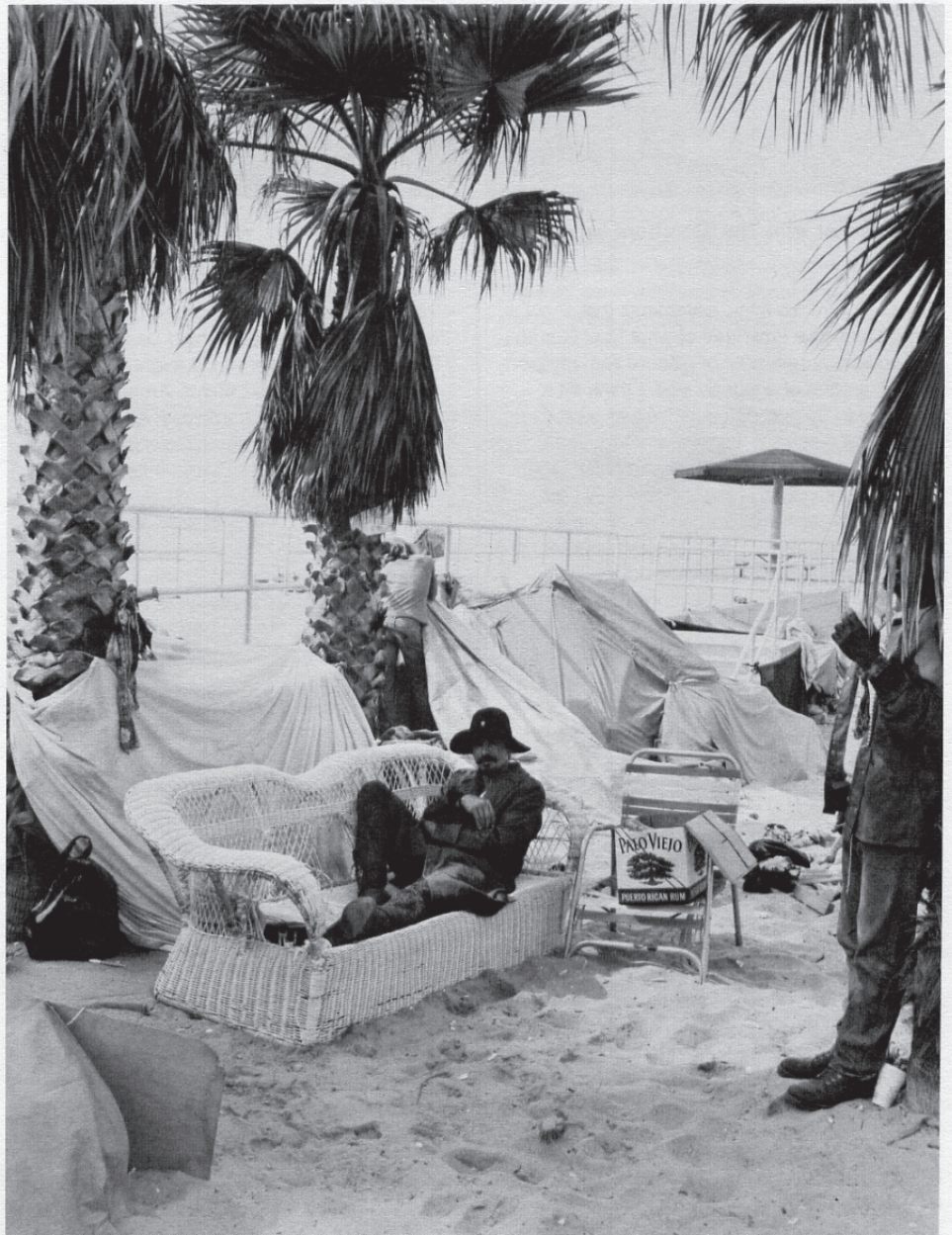
What I am struggling with is a fundamental spiritual issue, I suppose. How can art and artistic sensibility increase our ability to experience directly and hopefully and courageously? Never mind homelessness for

the moment. We must enter into whatever or whoever is before us with the purpose of being at home with it. Because that is a radical response. It is the response of communion with all life. I call this the radical hospitality of art—to encourage our own radical hospitality as citizens.

The radical response has always been the role of the artist. The most powerful instrument of social change is the individual human mind. I guess I am asking all of us to tend to our own mind. To find ways to release the instinctive creativity and passion that is ours. And to do so not only to help the homeless, but to recognize that by purifying our own humanity, we are more likely to become "home-makers" as well. I know that some of you will join this struggle as artists with all your keenness, inner discipline and imagination. But don't do it for the homeless: do it in the name of your dearest vision of what it means to be an artist, to be fully and artistically human.

Authentic revelations of our common humanity release an intuitive sense of political action. Every time I behold a Mozart piano concerto or a Cezanne landscape or a poem by Yeats I know I am closer to real political action. Not because some slogan has driven me or some sentimental poster has made me feel guilty, but rather because in the framework of art I experience my own humanity. To be fully human is to feel, and to hope, and to struggle and to feel somehow devoted to the word: home.

JONATHAN KOZOL is the author of *Rachel and Her Children*, a book about his journey into the world of New York's homeless shelters. He is also the author of the influential and classic study of inner city schools *Death at an Early Age*, and *Illiterate America*, a study of adult illiteracy.



Bill Aron, Venice Beach, 1987



John Fekner with The Storefront for Art & Architecture, *untitled*, New York City, 1986, stencil on pavement, photo © Bill Stamets

I'm going to make a few statements that show a little dissent. The emphasis of what Paul Gorman said strikes more a note of discord with my own views than that of anybody else. I think it's a little risky to try and particularize the appeal to the special audience. I spent years trying to figure out how I could get this particular group to see what's in it for them, or how they can bring their special gifts to bear on an issue. That would be fine if it were a somewhat removed moral issue, something that we just had to think about. We could each bring our special gifts to bear and hope that in a decade or a century we might evolve towards some change. But it doesn't seem as leisurely as that because it's right here, all around me.

I have a capacity to get detached a little bit, much as I've been immersed in the issue of homelessness now for many years. **But one instant inside the Prince George Hotel and that detachment is gone. Children everywhere, children all around you. These kids didn't do anything wrong, they've committed no crime. And because we know that they are at risk, because there are so many of them, because they are right here in our midst, because even in the United States you don't get your childhood twice, there really ought to be a sense of urgency, of desperation, in our response.** If there is not desperation in our response, if our response is relaxed, urbane, seemly, oblique, understated, then I think it says a great deal about our inability to gain a purchase on the world in which we truly live.

It's not that I don't think artists and architects have a great deal to give to this cause. But I

think we should do it as human beings. I think what we bring forward should be as citizens. Perhaps, in the short run, it might be best to leave our specialties behind. Architects could bring designs to the homeless. Artists could bring art. But homeless children need houses. There's really no way to avoid a hard, political response.

I have a great deal of respect for the American Institute of Architects. I've met with these folks at regional symposia that they organized around the theme of *In Search of Shelter*. In each city you had some obviously civic-minded architects getting together, brainstorming all night. But even there, there was a little bit of unreality about it. It was too much fun. It really didn't have anything to do emotionally with the matter at hand. One of the organizers said to me, "You know why it doesn't seem real? Because we're working with designs." The whole symposia was built on the idea that the problem was design. But it isn't. The organizer even conceded that all the aestheticizing of the issue may enable us to steer away from a political response.

We ought to search our hearts a little bit and ask if to some degree each of us, depending on our expertise, might be trying to adapt the needs of the homeless to conform to our peculiar interests instead of finding out exactly what they need and fighting for it very hard politically. Maybe it will help to have some good posters and a lot of good art. Maybe there are a lot of ways I can't think of because I've been divorced from a pure aesthetic life for so long. I was an English major and my interest was in metaphys-

ical poetry. But I don't think metaphysical poetry will do much good for the children of the Prince George Hotel. It seems that justice constitutes an overriding mandate. At such moments it is impossible to ask how it suits me.

JULIA KEYDEL is a documentary film and video artist who has addressed the subject of housing injustice since 1980. She teaches at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.



Nancy Stout, *Casa Rita*, 151st Street, Bronx, New York, 1987, 20" x 16", 1987, C-print from color transparency

I thought I should begin by asking myself the question that I frequently ask homeless men and women. And I ask: Twenty years ago, would you have expected to be involved with homelessness or to be homeless? I probably would have said no. My involvement began about seven years ago. There are a number of strands that led to my transformation from art historian to documentary video and film maker.

The trigger for me was a day that I returned from a class at NYU and found a picket line around the future site for an assessment center for homeless people proposed in my community. The community had a response that is repeated over and over again: not in my backyard. There were people on the line vehemently against this project. There were people around the picket line who were against the picketers. I had friends in both places. It made me want to discover what it was about the issue of homelessness that was tearing people apart. I wanted my work to be of a problem-solving nature. I wanted to discover who the homeless were. I started doing interviews and I accumulated a lot of footage. I wanted to show how a problem is dealt with. I wanted to show people that they could become involved; they don't have to avoid the issue.

The tape that I am working on right now deals with a project on my own block that was developed as a result of community involvement in an SRO hotel. The people in the block association decided that they were going to include the residents of the SRO hotel as members. That meant that people living in the SRO hotel were no longer on the outside. As a

result of that involvement, when we learned that the owner of the hotel was preparing to sell it, we were ready to go to bat for those people. They were our neighbors. We hatched the scheme of buying the SRO on our block. We now own the Capital Hall Hotel.

In documenting the Capital Hall project, the goal is to create a piece that can show people what it meant to cross over the line and become involved with people one might have been raised to think were in some way outsiders—people who didn't have any real meaning, any humanness. I've always been impressed by the fact that I grew up in a striving, middle class family. It's almost as if there was something in my brain which let me forget the reality of gradually being separated out and put into some kind of special territory. I guess I see at the heart of homelessness a kind of social injustice which disturbs me very, very deeply. I can only say that every time that I have ever crossed over the line and gotten involved with people I "wasn't supposed to get involved with," I've discovered myself.

ANDREW BYARD is an artist who was homeless for nine years. His work is featured in the book *Unforgotten Voices, Unforgettable Dreams*, which was sponsored by the Coalition for the Homeless.

I thought that when I was asked to speak I would talk about homelessness, but you can walk down the street and see it. This is about

art. So I want to focus on the *Unforgotten Voices Creative Workshop*, of which I am a member. *Unforgotten Voices* is a collective—a group of homeless artists who got together to become a support group.

As a homeless person, you learn you have nothing. You have no one. You live alone, you stand alone, you die alone. But it doesn't have to be that way. People can get together to support each other, to strengthen and empower each other.

Unforgotten Voices was created as a contest by Deborah Mashibini, Office Manager of the Coalition for the Homeless. She decided to run a contest for homeless writers. This led to the formation of the workshop.

The workshop provides a connection with other people—that one thing that keeps you alive. Art is an outlet, an option to express those things that you feel. I guess I wanted to go into the values of art, art as a creative option. It helps to strengthen and instill self-confidence. It helps to center who you are. **As a homeless person you start to believe you have no self-worth. There are all these standards that society creates for you to live by and as a homeless person you believe you have fallen below these standards. Art helps you to realize your ability. It helps you to trust in your visions and to communicate them to others.**

Art is about something rather than nothing. When I first ended up on the streets I believed that this was where things ended. It took a long time to think differently about things. *Unforgotten Voices* is a collection about a depth of experience that homeless people share.



Vito Acconci, *House of Cars #1*, Langton Street, San Francisco, California, 1983, used cars

KYONG PARK is an artist and architect who founded the Storefront for Art and Architecture, which he has directed since 1982. He was the organizer of **Homeless at Home**, a multi-faceted exhibition held in New York in 1986. A major publication on this exhibition is in production.

I am associated with a number of artists and architects through Storefront for Art and Architecture where we sponsored a project called *Homeless at Home*. It was a very long and agonizing process. While we were doing it it was very emotional, very political, but too liberal. But I do think it addressed the issue though the participation, my own and others', was a little selfish and self serving. The issue was homelessness, but it was not a project for the homeless. It was more of an act of socialization for artists and architects.

For those of us primarily concerned with aesthetics, a major social crisis raises the question of what our roles really are or can be. One hundred years ago an architect said that the task of art and architecture is primarily a social one. For the *Homeless at Home* project, Krzysztof Wodiczko designed a prototypical cart for the homeless. It is a very difficult and controversial project because the cart is a housing prototype that plants the idea that homeless people can form a viable sub-culture. This is a very complex issue. The way I feel about this now is that it is significant for the 21st century: the third millennium.

Editor's note:

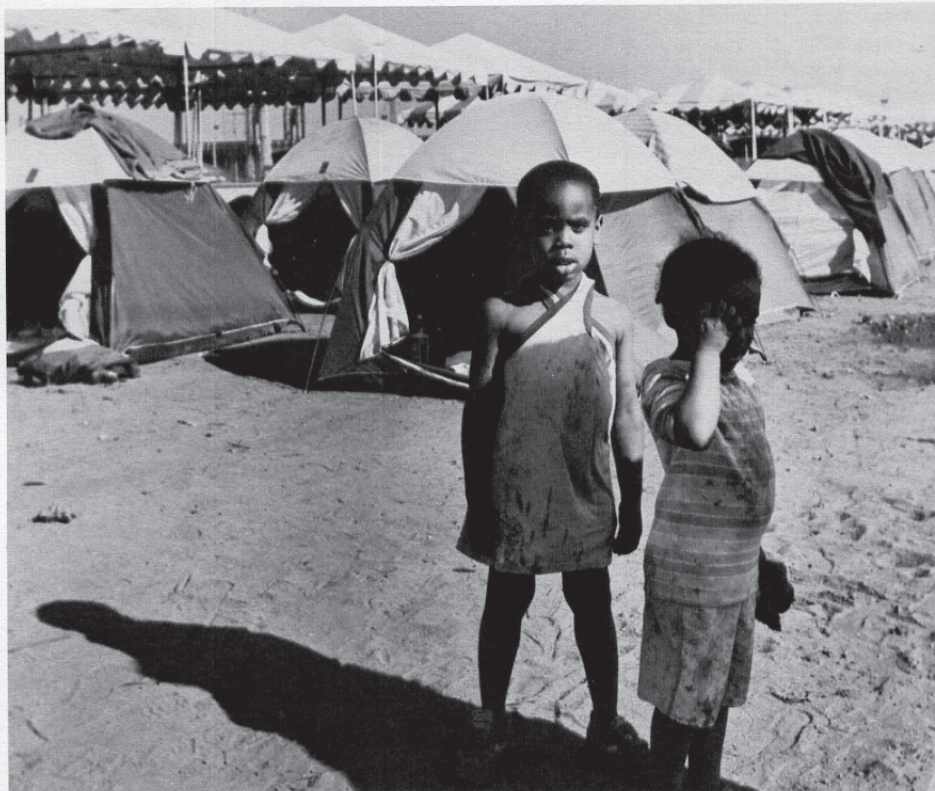
Homeless at Home began in 1984 as a collaborative project. The purposes of the project were to present the problems of the homeless to the community of artists and architects, and to collectively present visual propositions through the arts. This ambitious project raised the awareness of artists, and its open and pluralistic structure stimulated a wide variety of aesthetic action and response.

JERRY KEARNS is a cultural activist and painter whose work has dealt with a broad range of social and political issues. He is currently teaching at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

About eight years ago a critic friend of mine invited me up to Purchase, New York to talk to a bunch of students about art and politics and the relationship between them. At the time, a lot of people doubted that there was any relationship between those two things. **We still continue to have a denial of an ongoing relationship and a dialectic between a political state and civil society, and culture and aesthetic thinking and production.**

I think some of the basic issues we're dealing with here in the question of homelessness is the relationship between civil rights and state power. Basically we're talking about the oppressive use of state power to deny homes to people for the economic exploitation of those people. A lot of my work uses that kind of dialectic between an image of state power and an image of civil society.

Part of what we're talking about here in a



Mary Ann Dolcemascolo, *Urban Campground—First Arrival*, July 1987, (Jacobi and Shameka upon arrival at the "Independent Section of the Urban Campground").

general way, beyond the specifics of the question of housing and artists, is the question of how artists in general relate to political struggle. Ten years ago, when I first got involved in trying to relate my work specifically to political things, there were no or few people who had developed any sort of visibility within the mainstream as political artists. The times are different now. There are a number of us who have worked in the city over the last ten years who are visible within the mainstream as well as being active in communities. There are a number of artists who work within the mainstream who are very well known as "political" artists who have never worked in community groups or in association with specific movements. I think we should take every advantage possible. We are part of the mainstream. When we step outside of it and walk away from it, we narrow it.

Part of our responsibility as artists with some kind of social consciousness is to be there, so that the window that defines ideology, that defines what's thinkable within the culture is expanded by our presence. If we are not there it is less. Working with community groups, joining a specific political movement has its strengths for you as an artist and it has its drawbacks. It's no simple, easy road. But we all have to serve someone.

The myth that artists are sort of free and unto themselves is just that, a myth. One way that I have tried to search for cultural independence and a clear cultural voice was to help found a group called *Political Art Documentation & Distribution* here in this city. The group is now inactive, but in the five or six years the group was together we sponsored and co-sponsored a wide range of cultural, political, and activist projects. One of the reasons we founded the

group was to have an organized, cultural voice within political movements. Just because someone has a positive political ideology doesn't mean they have much of a cultural vision about how culture can relate to politics. Nor do they understand the necessity for an oppositional relationship of culture to politics. **Culture must have a clear voice. Cultural workers must be able to speak clearly within a political context as organized beings, or else we will be subsumed within whatever political context we are dealing with.**

I have a bit of advice. If we want to move to end homelessness or to improve the situation, one of the first things we can do is to step outside of our definitions as architects and artists and work as citizens. **I recommend working as citizens first and as artists or architects second.**

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Patricia C. Phillips (moderator)

I quite agree that we must all behave and act as citizens. But is there in fact a role for the arts to be catalytic, to encourage us to behave as citizens, or to help direct activities in constructive ways?

Keydel

I support wholeheartedly the political action thrust but I think that as makers of images, sounds, or structures, you can also do things. You have to go out and find the audience. Making a videotape about the *Capital Hall Project* means distributing it. It means putting it with groups that use it as a tool for consciousness

raising. It can be used as a tool in a situation where people in a community may be reluctant to get involved and perhaps by seeing something like it, they can become involved.

Kearns

Mao talked about culture as interrelated polarities. He used the words propaganda and agitation: propaganda meaning the dynamic of the people, not directly tied to the necessity for political change, and agitation meaning culture directly tied to political change. What I see in New York in the years that I've been involved in this is that there's a kind of spectrum between those two activities—between cultural recoding and political struggle. In my opinion, for the picture of the art and the artist to be politically effective it must be tied to some form of direct political organization. Art must function as a service to that particular political movement at a given time. It can have power and presence and meaning as an independent entity but it has a very small likelihood of engendering any immediate political change.

I would, however, like to get over that sort of direct relationship between cultural production and political activity as a necessity for organizing people politically. I would follow up what Jonathan Kozol was saying that sometimes it's a mistake to think only in terms of our profession. If you organize an artists' group in relationship to a housing group and you don't make it a factor that all the people who come there have to make posters or art that's about housing, you'll organize more artists politically.

Kozol

To reframe this once more, it seems to me that an architect might well come to the homeless issue out of a natural affinity—because he or she knows that his or her career is somehow built around housing, around structures. That might be the moral connection which wires them into the issue. But when they actually confront the issue, I don't see why they have to do it as architects. It seems to me that when we insist that the specialist apply his/her special skills to the urgent crisis then we have to twist those skills in order to make them relevant. It probably would do considerable harm to metaphysical poetry to try to connect it with the problems in the Prince George Hotel. I think making this direct, mechanical connection is not only impractical, it's juvenile.

Park

I think we have to do almost everything, or as much as we can, in different modes. There comes a time when (let's say the political is done) you have to hire an architect for a housing project. I'm concerned with how the architect would go about producing homes rather than the housing we are surrounded by. We all have a certain ability at that point, and we should learn how to use it.

Audience member

I disagree with Mr. Kozol intensely. The confrontation with the homeless is scary to many peo-

ple. An artist or architect who wants to use his art to address this can get out there with documentary films or some kind of art that can bring the uninitiated closer to what they don't understand. It is unreasonable to say that these categories have no function.

Kozol

I may be in the minority in saying this, but I can't see any form, or any way to effect important, direct, political change that is more effective than direct political action. It seems bizarre that we should need art to inspire us to do what humanity ought to compel us to do. In writing *Rachel and Her Children*, I tried to make the book as close as possible to pure journalistic, political reportage in order to avoid any aesthetic wall between myself and the reader. There is a lot of misinformation about the homeless in this room. I don't try to debate every error I hear. But the only way to correct it is to read some recent book on this subject or by actually walking into a shelter and doing something concrete.

L.L.

(Transcript editor)

A REACTION TO ART AND THE HOMELESS SYMPOSIUM

I was not at all certain that *Art and the Homeless* had any necessary connection, any more than "art and sneakers," as a friend suggested. I feared a patronizing exhortation of the privileged—artists to perform their tricks on behalf of the deprived, and rain down the benefit of culture upon them. The coupling of the two words might calm the consciences of artists without forcing them really to come to grips either with homelessness or with the possible implications of their work in relation to it. But I was reluctant to abandon the possibility of making this connection.

So I went to the discussion, hoping to leave more certain about this connection than I had been when I arrived. And indeed I did, and was relieved to see how seriously and openly artists approached the problem; but I also felt surer that questions I thought essential weren't even being asked, and that basic assumptions passed unexamined. To my pleasure, I was persuaded that a link between art and homelessness (and by extension other social issues) was conceivable and worth striving for; to my distress, I concluded that the philosophical basis for such a link had been destroyed.

After the artist-panelists had spoken about their various efforts to bring their art to bear on the question of homelessness, Jonathan Kozol provided the drama of the discussion by insisting, based on his burning experience among the children of the welfare hotels, that direct personal or political action was the best (and therefore, because of the urgency of the problem, the only possible) response to the problem. First apologetically, then increasingly sternly as he grew frustrated by the other panelists' and audience members' attempts to



Mary Ann Dolcemascio, *Urban Campground—Love Camp*, September 1987, (Jacobi and Shameka two months later after having moved into the organized self-help group "Love Camp" section of the Urban Campground). Both photographs are from a series for exhibition, book, and video projects documenting the homeless populations of Los Angeles, California

put forward valid connections between art and social justice, Kozol told us that art simply built an "aesthetic wall" obscuring one's vision of the problem; that he did not "see how one could conceivably say that anything is more important than the lives of children;" and finally that he could not imagine "any form or any way to effect important political change that is more effective than direct political action." In short, the whole effort the panelists had struggled with was a useless fraud and a delusion.

Kozol denied that art served a needed function of persuasion. Challenged by Patti Phillips, first obliquely, then directly (in a phrase left out of the transcript excerpts)—"Why did you write a book?"—Kozol insisted that he had striven to bleach the taint of art from his writing. "It must be a very alienated society," he said, "where art is needed to raise our consciousness and inspire us to do what humanity ought to compel us to do." As an audience member correctly (I think) summed up, Kozol established an "either-or" separation between art, which is "unreal," and direct action. For him, there need be no complex questioning of art's role as propaganda, as therapy, or as anything else: the issues raised by Laura Lombardo in her introduction, by Jerry Kearns in his discussion of political action and art, by Paul Gorman's argument for the spiritual influence of art all disappear, and the right answer stands forth in the radiance of simplicity. (A sidelight: Kozol mentioned that he had given up his early love, metaphysical poetry, for social action: a violent reversal from the beautiful tangles and uncertainties of Donne to the clean simplicity with which he now, apparently, views the world.) Inspiration is replaced by compulsion.

As the debate grew sharp, I was struck by a frustration of my own, coming not from certainty but from my feeling, which had grown as I had listened to Gorman, Park, Byard, Keydel, and Kearns, that indeed the effort to link art and



Jon Peterson, *Orange Shelter*, downtown Los Angeles, California, 1979, 48" x 30" x 82," plywood, masonite, and fiberglass, photo © Jon Peterson

social issues was worthwhile (although, I thought, mostly unconsummated by the panelists). There seemed however, to be no answer to Kozol's fierce commitment. The practical benefits of art work might be (and were) urged; but Kozol (and it should be clear that I don't mean him only, but his line of thought, which I take to be widely held and persuasive) could

and would respond that any measures filtered through art must be inferior to direct ones. His certainty dominated the discussion.

His advantage, I believe, grew out of his personal experience, certainly, but also out of the unanswered questions of definition to which I had hoped to find solutions during the discussion. I had observed that most of the speakers had proposed their projects as either art-as-propaganda or art-as-therapy. None proposed that art possesses an innate virtue. Paul Gorman came close to doing so, saying that art enlarged the spirit and made one a better person; but he sounded soft-centered and obsolescently romantic, and went on to emphasize the role of art in bringing home the individuality of the sufferers in the crisis that goes by the name of homelessness.

Here, I thought, was the root of our inability to answer Kozol. Only a definition of art that allots it a place of unique virtue can support a logical argument against his insistence on the superior good of direct action; and—through the concerted effort of twentieth-century artists—such a definition has become impossible. While the artists on the panel and in the audience fought against accepting Kozol's decree of their uselessness, they—we—could propose no counter-definition to his: Art as a frivolous, elitist distraction from hard reality. Kozol alone used the word "pure" to characterize art, and then as if he had said "contaminated." Only he dared place an absolute value on art—and that value was negative. The artist-panelists' dilemma struck me as quintessentially modern: unable to revive the idea of art as possessing some unique and essential virtue, they must fall back on viewing art as a means to some end, permit-



Ann Marie Rousseau, image from her book, *Shopping Bag Ladies: Homeless Women Speak About Their Lives*, published in 1981 by Pilgrim Press, New York City

ting the riposte that other tools are more immediate and efficient. This may well be false: the processes of art can be, as several panelists suggested, effective mechanisms. But rhetorically and logically the anti-art position has all the heavy artillery.

It seems to me, then, that Kozol's contribution to the panel most vividly revealed a problem of definition that could prove paralyzing to the attempt to bring art and homelessness into a relation. Not only *art*, but *homelessness* as well goes ill- or un-defined. The panelists and audience at least grappled, if incoherently, with Kozol's definition of art; they did not address his (unspoken) definition of homelessness. Laura Lombardo suggested that art could enact a debate, as yet rudimentary, about what this phenomenon we refer to (as if we knew what we meant) as *homelessness* is and means. Are food and shelter, or food, shelter, and literacy, or whatever Kozol has in mind, the only lacks that transform people into "the homeless"? I doubt it; I doubt even that he would say so directly. How are the homeless different from

the poor, from derelicts, from beggars (what we used to call people who had nowhere to sleep but the streets)? Art may have an ideological task beyond drawing attention to the problem (a job which seems by now superfluous); it may be able to attune the viewer not only to the facts, but to the possible meanings of the facts.

I have played here with some ideas about ideas; so doing, I have, I suppose, let words and concepts distance me from the fact of homelessness. But I argue that we need the long view as well as the close-up, the portrait (to use Paul Gorman's word). For if we fail to examine our assumptions and structures, our actions will be restricted—as the Kozol prescription would narrow the range of acceptable responses—inconsistent, indefensible, and possibly dangerous.

It is absurd that I should have to say this.

Nancy B. Mandel

Writer and graduate student in Architecture and Design Criticism

DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE ACTION: WODICZKO'S HOMELESS VEHICLE

In January, 1988, the Clocktower Gallery of P.S. 1 in lower Manhattan exhibited the *Homeless Vehicle Project* designed by Krzysztof Wodiczko. The vehicle, which was intended to meet the daily requirements of a homeless adult, was the consequence of many conversations and interviews that Wodiczko had conducted with homeless people in New York City. During these interviews, Wodiczko investigated the *immediate* needs, routines and aggravations involved in the day-to-day life of the homeless individual. The word *immediate* is emphasized because the vehicle is not merely a comment on the condition of homelessness, but addresses the compelling need for expediency in creating shelter for those without it.

Rather than continue on the well-worn path of awakening public consciousness to the plight of the homeless, the results of which have little tangible effect, Wodiczko deals with today—and now. Right now a homeless person needs a



Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Homeless Vehicle*, 1988, photo © Francois Alecoque

place to sleep. Right now he or she needs a cart to transport the bottles that can be redeemed at supermarkets (an enterprise Wodiczko found flourishing among the homeless).

In a conversation between Wodiczko and Rudolph Luria (a writer, participant, and supporter of the project) that was published and distributed during the Clocktower exhibit, the artist's thoughts on his project and its relationship to homelessness are elaborated. The following paragraphs are excerpted from this conversation:

"Though we encounter the homeless as figures anchored to a grate or bench and asleep in the subway as we rush to work, the activity of surviving on the streets of New York is actually dominated by the constant necessity for movement, often in response to the actions

of authorities. Survival, therefore, compels mobility.

"Through the use of adapted, appropriated vehicles, some homeless individuals have managed to develop a means of economic sustenance in the city. These persons, known as scavengers, spend their days collecting, sorting, and returning cans to supermarkets in return for the five-cent deposit. Shopping and postal carts and other wheeled vehicles are used for containing and transporting cans and bottles during the day and for storage of collected materials during the night. Crowds of homeless redeemers outside supermarkets have become commonplace since the bottle bill went into effect in 1983.

"In opposition to the notion of the immobile figure whose status is provisional and ambiguous, the scavenger stakes a claim to space in

the city and indicates his/her membership in the urban community.

"The shelter vehicle attempts to function usefully in the context of New York City street life. Therefore, its point of departure is the strategies of survival which urban nomads presently utilize. Through discussions with scavengers, a proposal for a vehicle to be used both for personal shelter, and can and bottle transportation and storage was developed."

More generally, Wodiczko and Luria see the cart as a metaphor for the increasing inability of the city to shelter its residents: "The prototype vehicle bears a resemblance to a weapon. In our view, the movements of carts through New York City are acts of aggression, opposing the continuing ruination of an urban community which excludes thousands of persons from even the most meager means of life."

R.S.

Special thanks to Tom Finkelpearl

HOME STREET HOME: ARTISTS IN SEATTLE ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN THE STREETS

It is ironic that some of the most progressive cities compose and enforce rigid ordinances that threaten basic humanity to ensure "livability." Recently, Seattle passed ordinances against aggressive begging and the selling of fortified wines and liquors in the city. People convicted of aggressive begging could be fined up to \$500. The peculiar ironies of this legislation are obvious. These two policies put the impoverished and the homeless out of sight and out of mind. They also legitimize the potential for police harassment toward homeless individuals. The attitude these ordinances project is that the homeless are guilty of homelessness—they alone are to blame for their predicament.

In response to these ordinances and Seattle's growing homeless population, Gallery 911, an independent, alternative arts organization, and the Fremont Public Association, a social service group providing support to the poor, collaborated to sponsor a project called *Home Street Home*. For one week in November 1987, thirteen artists created either installations or performances on the street to dramatize the realities of the homeless community. The project was a challenge to the egregiousness of these new ordinances, as well as an opportunity to question the notion of livability—and livability for all citizens of Seattle.

Home Street Home was constructed as a media event. It was orchestrated to get the attention of the newspapers and television stations in Seattle, but the immediate audience for these installations and events was more specific. This project occurred in the streets for the individuals who live on the streets of Seattle, as well as for the social service employees who work quietly and often unrecognized on behalf of homeless families.

In one project, sculptor and performance artist Cris Bruch donned a cook's uniform and pushed a cooking cart through the city streets. Bruch described his project, *Vegetable Currency*: "The roller roaster is a medium sized



Cris Bruch, *Vegetable Currency*, Seattle, Washington, 1987, demonstration/performance, photo © K. Stephens



David Finn, *Masked Figures*, 1985, installation at Houston and Elizabeth Streets, New York City, mixed media, photo © Andreas Sterzing

shopping cart with several hundred cooking utensils hanging from it. The baskets have been converted to a large charcoal grill and a smaller warming grill. I take it out and set up kitchen and can cook just about anything and roll around at the same time . . . I roasted whole onions in the coals and traded them for odd stuff or gave them away. Onions are the most widely consumed food in the world . . . I want to point out that even if a food is not appealing, looks like a chunk of coal . . . that beneath these burnt layers is a really sweet center. That's the way I've always thought about people." On sidewalks and in vacant lots he cooked onions over smoky fires, and on the final day of the performance, he prepared a huge, celebratory meal for many of the homeless men and women in the neighborhood who provided much of the food for the occasion. The loss of home is the loss of ritual, and the sharing of a meal is one of the most restorative rites. Bruch's project rejuvenated, if briefly, a sense of ceremony and community to the homeless. The *Home Street Home* project addressed the dilemma of the audience. Who is the significant audience? How can art make a community examine its own actions, as well as look at things it would rather dismiss? By invading the city for this series of installations and performances, the artists chose to enter someone's

home—the homeless whose residence is the street. The project supported art that addressed the community and the specific impact and consequences of homelessness in one city rather than the more abstract, removed universal issues of poverty. As Glenn Weiss, director of Gallery 911, said, "*Home Street Home*, and most community-oriented and activist, art is something that no one really expects or asks for, but when it appears, generally people are pleased and effected because it is there." Homelessness is a global condition, but this project aggressively proposed that it is most effectively explored and concretely exposed at a specific scale, in a particular place. *Home Sweet Home* is about making art at home—for home.

P.C.P.

NOTES FROM A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID FINN

"IT'S A DIFFICULT TIME FOR ART," sculptor David Finn says without hesitation and seemingly without regret. We live, he believes, in a world where "pluralism has devalued art," robbing the image of ethical or moral weight. At a time when image takes precedence over a complex reality, Finn is caught between feeling

that there are better things for him to do than add to the "cultural baggage" of society by creating more images, and believing his sculptures can "help us to further our understanding of the world in a positive way."

In the past several years, Finn has installed strange, puppet-like figures in vacant lots and derelict buildings in and around Manhattan. Composed principally of waste materials—old newspapers, discarded clothing, plastic garbage bags, cardboard—the figures have been lined up against walls, tied to fences, perched on stairs, and left lying in the snow. Though occasionally particular political events have inspired their creation (the figures tied to the fence on Houston Street, for example, reflect Finn's interest in groups of people who have chained themselves to fences to protest nuclear weapons), the figures are politically charged in a vague and indirect way. In New York City, such figures evoke images of groups of homeless men and women lying in the streets, exposed to the elements, living lives of sheer exteriority. Like many of the homeless, Finn's figures appear to be frayed around the edges and fragile, yet are deceptively strong. They survive the exposure in a way that defies the odds. They are, in Finn's words, "pre-destroyed," but stronger because of it.

Finn has never made figures that specifically



Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, (for Les Petites Filles Aux Allumettes, Inc.), *La Donna Delinquenta*, performance at the Corona Theater, Montreal, Canada, May 16–June 7, 1987, photo © Martha Fleming, Kristina Angelo

LES PETITES FILLES AUX ALLUMETTES: IDEAS OF ABANDONMENT

Les Petites Filles aux Allumettes, Inc. (The Little Match Girls) is an ongoing collaboration of Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe. Established six years ago and based in Montreal, Canada, *The Little Match Girls* has produced three major public art installations. Each project appropriates an abandoned building to produce works that Fleming and Lapointe describe as "a hybrid of social theory, scholarly research, architectural archeology, popular history, and contemporary visual and theatrical arts." Their most recent project, *La Donna Delinquenta* involves an abandoned vaudeville theatre, the Corona Theatre, as a site to explore female criminality and marginality.

For each project, Fleming and Lapointe work, often for long periods of time, with Montreal city officials to secure use of the abandoned buildings. As the artists describe their process: *The buildings themselves are not cheap and temporary exhibition space, nor are they found objects—they are ideologically charged architectures that are carefully chosen as integral parts of the projects . . . They were all, at one time, of central importance to their neighborhoods, which are some of the most economically depressed in the Greater Montreal area.*

The installations, comprised of paintings, drawings, sculpture, and performance, are short-lived, normally lasting for two weeks. At the conclusion of the project, some of the interventions remain within the architecture and other artifacts and objects are taken away. But the ephemeral installations have a significant residual effect—the buildings become available to the community for continued cultural work and research. *The Little Match Girls'* art aggressively, politically, and passionately offers an alternative to the tragedy of abandonment of places and of people.

In a letter to me on June 28, 1988, Fleming

reflect the conditions of the homeless though he concedes that homelessness was something he thought about and inspired him when he first started making them. A strict sociological interpretation of the work is an anathema to Finn. Equally important are the aesthetic and metaphorical qualities inherent in the figures. He is not trying, as many artists are, to "aestheticize politics or politicize aesthetics."

Finn is interested in what he calls "street theatre," in which the homeless play, like everyone else, a certain role. The masks that his figures often wear represent the hiding or masking of the individual in the public sphere. This masking removes the individual from reality, creating ambiguity or a crisis of identity. Yet, one could say that it is perhaps the privilege of those who have private lives to wear such masks in public. The homeless are excluded from participating in such a theatre because there is no public/private line for them to cross. They have nowhere to escape. In such a theatre, they are forced into the position of passive onlookers.

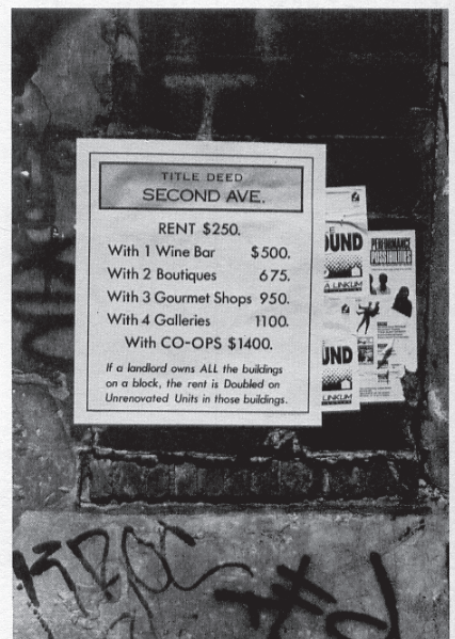
The irony in this reading is that, as Finn himself notes, most people refuse to see his figures as extensions or mirror images of themselves. They see such masked figures as other, much as they see homeless people as other. In such a situation, a homeless person, who is necessarily operating on a level closer to reality by virtue of the fact that he or she must work just to stay alive, is avoided or neglected as some-

one that is not there, that is less real. We mask the homeless, never realizing that we ourselves wear masks.

Such is one possible reading of the figures given the context in which they appeared. Finn refuses to believe, however, that these figures could act as a catalyst for direct political action on the part of the viewer. If the street theatre that inspires them is already one step away from reality, the sculptures offer an even greater removal, a simulation of a simulation. Their non-literal message is what makes them art. Finn cautions that "people should not believe so readily in other people's images." Art, and propaganda, deal in deceptions. They have no mortality.

So why create art that deals with political or social issues, no matter how vague the references? Finn claims that although he doesn't think his art will help change society or end homelessness, there is the constant need to test that belief. It is wrong to preclude the possibility of art making a difference at some point in the future, as it has in the past. Finn says that his figures are meant to be about construction and destruction, about human mortality. Finn, who struggled for and eventually lost an apartment in New York City, says, half-joking, half-serious, "I guess mortality in New York is sort of like losing your apartment."

L.L.



Day Gleeson and Dennis Thomas, *Art for the Evicted*, 1984, 26" x 24", silkscreen

and Lapointe expressed their ideas about homelessness, as well as some of their specific concerns and aesthetic intentions. The following is a passage from their thoughtful reflection on the idea of abandonment explored in their work.

P.C.P.

For us, the issues of 'homelessness and poverty' are complex and deeply entwined with so many other similar 'facts' or products. That is to say, not-having-a-home is a product of the social structure, and unravelling the issues involves a discursive look at the structure itself.

In the same way as architecture itself has a physical and a metaphysical aspect (both of which are, to us, equally palpable), homelessness is physical and metaphysical. Though we would point out that homelessness as an issue is not the sole reason why we work this way as artists, it is one of the social issues addressed by the very fact that we work in abandoned buildings. And here is the key word—abandonment.

It's not that there are no roofs for the homeless. Both the buildings which we work in and people on the street outside their boarded up windows are abandoned. We like this word because it resonates with the spiritual and metaphysical truth of disenfranchisement while at the same time describing the physical state of being left for dead.

We choose the buildings carefully—they are not temporary lodgings for works of art about social issues—the buildings themselves embody the issues we wish to address. For example, we spent three years fighting for access to the Corona Theatre in St. Henri, which became La Donna Delinquenta. The building had been, for 75 years, the only place people could go that was not the family, the church, or the factory, in one of the oldest industrial centres of all of Canada—the Lachine Canal area. Both the Canal and the Corona were closed in 1967, strangling culturally and economically a proud working-class neighbourhood where now the only skill passed on in families is the welfare cheque. We re-opened the theatre with a 'show' about the discourse of criminalisation, and nothing was lost on the neighbours, who came in thousands.

The audience in fact consists largely of people who are rarely, if ever, in museums, and the art world seems to be by turns threatened by, or dismissive of, our work as a consequence.

In any case, it now appears to us that abandonment is something which contains its own hope for redemption.

*That one can abandon oneself.
One can abandon reason.*

Martha Fleming
Lyne Lapointe

THE DIALECTICS OF HOMELESSNESS: CONSEQUENCES FOR COMMUNITY

The contemporary circumstances may be unique, but homelessness is not a new crisis. In a sobering book by C.J. Ripton-Turner entitled *A History of Vagrants and Vagrancy* and

Beggars and Begging (first published in 1887 and reprinted in 1972) the author describes his task in the preface: "... I have become conscious of the magnitude of the subject I have undertaken, and that to describe fully from the earliest period the condition of the outcasts of society involves an account of the social and political struggles of the lower classes to emancipate themselves, to trace out, in fact, the vicissitudes of the servile classes from the time they are servile by inheritance or by destiny, until they become free members of society, and leave only a remnant who are servile or abject from choice, and whose history becomes a record of hypocrisy, humbug, and habitual idleness." ¹ The book describes and documents an international chronology of homelessness from 368 A.D. through the late 19th century. The author attempts to bring an even-handed, scholarly approach to the subject but the volatile emotional substance of the topic is more compelling than the daunting avalanche of facts.

Ripton-Turner's analysis and sentiments vacillate between what he perceives as the two types of homeless people—the worthy and the unworthy. The deserving are condemned to their unhoused circumstances by forces beyond their control; they do not want to be homeless and are humbled and humiliated by their plight. The undeserving homeless, on the other hand, face their situation with arrogant acceptance; they, in some ways, choose to be desultory. The author substantiates this dialectic with the observation that the unworthy homeless are aggressive and tactless enough to beg on the streets; the deserving homeless are too

ashamed of their impoverishment to beg. Researched and written over 100 years ago, Ripton-Turner's reprehensible simplification of homelessness is still relevant. In the late 20th century, cultural response to a growing homeless population has been either benevolent paternalism, or repulsion and rejection. The housed members of the community are the arbiters of entitlement and the fragile balance of community morality and individual welfare is threatened. Homelessness has created a profound spiritual ambivalence of local and global communities.

In addition to the ideas of the worthy and the unworthy homeless, there is also the dialectic of the normal and the abnormal. In spite of the culture's pluralistic disposition, there remains a narrow range and conception of normalcy. At the same moment, there is a broadening of benign tolerance—in this case, of passively accepting the unacceptable reality of a significant community of homeless men, women, and children. The ironies are obvious—and disturbing.

This past year Gallaudet College, the only institution of higher education in the United States for the deaf, appointed its first deaf president since its founding 124 years ago. It was hard-won progress, and only a focused, persistent student strike made the board of trustees move away from their intentions to appoint a hearing candidate. ²

The college's board did not comprehend the conviction, passion, and clear vision of the students' demands. Made up of a majority of hearing members, the Gallaudet board perceived the students as handicapped, as limited by their deafness. They wanted to take care of



Ann Marie Rousseau, image from her book, *Shopping Bag Ladies: Homeless Women Speak About Their Lives*, published in 1981 by Pilgrim Press, New York City



William Fulbrecht, *Home Hearth, Happiness* (detail) 1988, Times Square Subway Station, concrete

the students, to protect the future of the college, and did not recognize the loud independence of the students at Gallaudet.

There is a message here about individual and collective responses to homelessness. The Gallaudet College board reacted to the need for a new president without a vision of radical possibility. A well-intentioned protectionism led to a first and faulty solution (the appointment of a hearing candidate) without reviewing the narrow and repressive conditions of the response—and how much everything had changed. Benevolence without vision stimulates a response that perpetuates a cycle of convention. The appointment of a deaf president at Gallaudet College is a great triumph for the deaf community, but it is more generally about the progressive transformation of all individuals within a community from a cycle of dependency and beneficence to a union of mutual cooperation.

Homelessness is a spiritual and political tragedy that jeopardizes the vitality and future of civility. In 1755, Reverend James Hervey, a man noted for his compassion and piety, wrote: "Towards the distressed but industrious poor I would cultivate a tender and ever-yearning compassion . . . But as to common beggars, I frankly own that I look upon it as my duty to discourage such cumberers of the ground . . . Money or victual bestowed on these worth-less wretches is not real beneficence . . . Let us unanimously shake off these dead weights . . . Let us be deaf to their most importune clamours. . . ." ³ Homelessness is about the intrinsic relationship of individuals needs and community response. It requires an expanded perception of normalcy and compassionate judgment to insure moral and constructive action.

It is not about protecting those perceived as limited by their different circumstances or justifying our own deafness, silence, or prejudicial

perceptions.

P.C.P.

1. C.J. Ripton-Turner, **A History of Vagrants and Vagrancy and Beggars and Begging**, Patterson Smith, Montclair, 1972. pp. vii.
2. Oliver Sacks, *The Revolution of the Deaf*, **The New York Review**, Vol. XXXV, No. 9, June 2, 1988, pp. 23-28.
3. Ripton-Turner, pp. 671.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS . . .

The relationship examined in this newsletter, art and homelessness, and at the symposium held on the same topic, is, admittedly, a very narrow one. But this narrow and seemingly esoteric discussion is actually a function of the larger nagging issues of art and its potency in the political and cultural arena. It is in this area that decisions and policies are made that carry the force of change. The ability of visual art to effect change is what is in question.

There is little doubt that art can transform, excite, inform, or inspire, but can it actually effect societal change? It can reflect that change or seize the cultural moment, perhaps, but the entire audience at the symposium seemed stunned by Jonathon Kozol's assertion that aesthetic considerations have no role in political issues, and that direct political action is the only agent for change. But many may have overlooked one of his asides; he stated that literature—metaphysical poetry—had no place in political activism and that metaphysical poetry would suffer in such a marriage. In other words, when art leaves the metaphysical realm of being and becoming, it suffers.

Nancy Mandel, in her response to Kozol in this newsletter, was disturbed that no one on the symposium panel argued or noted the

innate virtue of art, but limited their comments to art's therapeutic or propagandistic role. In defense of Kozol, political art has rarely been anything but therapeutic or propagandistic; any virtue, innate or aesthetic, in art with political content, is often lost in the expediency of the subject. In art, integrity or political correctness of content does not necessarily reflect the quality of aesthetic means or form. Too often the audience for political art is confronted with facile associations and mistakes its pangs of conscience for sparks of revelation.

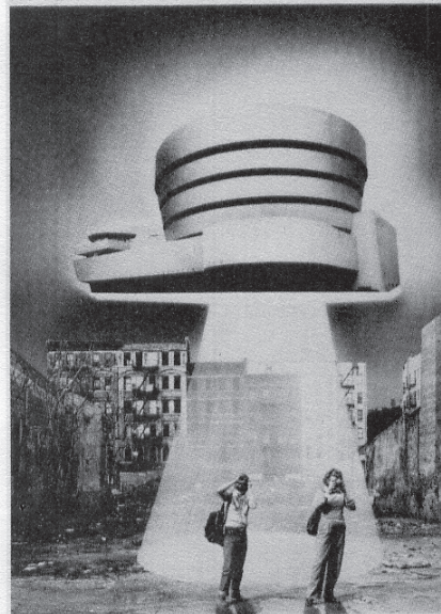
During the Grammy Awards this year the leader of the rock group U2, on acceptance of an award, recited a list of great leaders and martyrs who inspired the group: Martin Luther King, the Kennedys, John Lennon, Gandhi. . . . This rock star granted himself instant moral authority by the correctness of his assertions. I suppose the young audience for U2 mistakes this for seriousness. Wearing the badge of martyr (or self-promotion by association) is a seductive trap for the concerned artist.

In this newsletter we have presented and discussed the work of many artists whose commitment and sensitivity to the plight of the homeless has resulted in powerful and thought-provoking images and has enabled them to avoid the traditional pitfalls of art with political intent. Let me conclude by quoting an excerpt from Paul Gorman's response to Jonathon Kozol in notes received after the May 10 symposium:

"If I were talking to complacent artists, I wouldn't stress the points I have. But I take this audience to be committed, and I only want to urge you not to sacrifice the deepest gifts of revelation in the name of immediate political necessity. . . . I think . . . qualities of awakeness, presence, hospitality, mindfulness, as well as anger and commitment . . . are often most effectively affirmed through the arts."

R.S.

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL COLONIZATION



THE MOTHER SHIP LANDS

Janet Koenig, *After a Successful Colonization* *The Mother Ship Lands*, 1986, off-set print

ISSUES

PUBLIC ART

The Public Art Fund is supported in part by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the following generous supporters:

BENEFACTORS

AT&T Foundation
Con Edison
The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
Intrepid Fund
The J.M. Kaplan Fund, Inc.
Kent Fine Art Inc.
Ketcham & McDougall Foundation
Ronay and Richard Menschel
Maragaret T. Morris Foundation
Parker Chapin Flattau & Klimpl
The Plumsock Fund
The Port Authority of NY & NJ
John J. Reynolds
Helena Rubinstein Foundation
Samuel and May Rudin Foundation Inc.
Spectacolor, Inc.
Anonymous

PATRONS

The Carlisle Collection, Ltd.
Seymour Eisenberg Memorial Foundation
Donna & Sam Frank Fund
Doris and Alan Freedman Family
Philanthropic Fund
GFI/Knoll International Foundation
Agnes Gund
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hoffman
Institutional Investor, Inc.
InterMetro Industries Corporation
Michael Krichman and Leslie Simon
Metropolitan Transit Authority
Morgan Guaranty Trust Company
Progressive Companies
Judith O. and Robert E. Rubin
Rudin Management Co., Inc.
Richard and Edna Salomon Foundation
John Weber Gallery
Anonymous

SPONSORS

The Barrington Foundation, Inc.
David W. Bernant
Grace Borgenicht Gallery
Botwinick-Wolfensohn Foundation, Inc.
Mr. Eric S. Dobkin
Mr. and Mrs. George E. Doty
The Durst Foundation
Beatrice and Lloyd Frank
Karen Freedman and Roger Weisberg
Grow Tunneling Corp.
Kautz Family Fund
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen M. Kellen
Estee Lauder, Inc.
Judith H. Lewis
Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Menschel
Robert Miller Gallery
Mobil Foundation, Inc.
Mary R. Morgan
Ralph E. Ogden Foundation, Inc.
The Howard Phipps Family Foundation
The Reed Foundation, Inc.
Mr. George M. Ross
Stephen C. Swid and Nan G. Swid Foundation
Swig Weiler and Arnow Co., Inc.
Mr. H.R. Young

DONORS

Brooke Alexander
Richard Artschwager
Richard Brown Baker
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Baumritter
Katherine T. Blacklock
Joan and Lawrence S. Blum
Louis Blumengarten
Jeffrey Chanin and Karen Lovdahl
Marcy and Leona Chanin Foundation Inc.
Marc C. and Jennifer Cohn
Mark di Suvero
Hester Diamond
Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Dominianni
Equitable Life Assurance Society of the U.S.
Joan Feeney and Bruce Phillips
George Allan Fowlkes
Robert A. and Linda S. Friedman Foundation

Kitty and Herbert Glantz
Ann Brody Glazer
Robert G. Goelet
Marian Goodman
Peter Goodman
Donald and Roberta Gratz
Theodora S. and Robert S. Greenbaum
Rodney A. Greenblat
Grow Group, Inc.
Richard Haas, Inc.
Patricia E. Harris and Mark D. Lebow
Barbara Hoffman
Mr. and Mrs. Howard G. Jacobs
George J. Joelson
Barbara Knapp
Paul B. Kopperl
Elizabeth and Michael Mayers
Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Mercy, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Moskowitz
Sara Nathan and Joel Kazis
Orange Outdoor Advertising, Inc.
PaineWebber Group, Inc.
The Richard Ravitch Foundation Inc.
RKO General, Inc.
George Rickey
Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Rose
Arthur Ross Foundation
Clifford Ross and Bonnie Brown
Robert and Barbara Schwartz
Seevak Family Fund
Martin E. Segal
Selma and Alvin Silverman Foundation Inc.
Jerry Spiegel Fund
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald P. Stanton
Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Tarr
Valerie E. Tarzian
William S. Taubman
The Rose and John Tishman Fund, Inc.
Suzanne W. Tishman
Dr. and Mrs. Arnold Turtz
Roy J. Zukerberg Foundation
Anonymous

CONTRIBUTORS

Dennis Adams
Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Alpern
Arthur G. Altschul
American Natural Beverage Corporation
Edward A. Ames
Stephen Antonakos
Bridget and John Barnes
Kent and June Barwick
Bonnie Benrubi
Sue and Joseph Berland
Drs. Kenneth and Jessie Berkowitz
William Bernhard
Flora Biddle
Patricia Blake
Laurence M. Bloch
Peggy and Joseph Bloch
Willard Boepple
Louise Bourgeois
Joanne Brockley
Areta Buk
Lawrence B. Buittenwiser
Leslie Cecil Gallery
David and Mariam Chalfin Fund
Jim Chanin
Nancy Chanin
Vivian Chill
Pierre Clerk
Howard M. Cohn
Anita and Lloyd Cropper
Elizabeth de Cuevas
Mr. and Mrs. Lewis B. Cullman
Jessica Cusick
Richard Dattner
Michael and Dudley Bel Balso
Stephen B. and Susan Bryne Delman
Barbaralee Diamonstein and Carl Spielvogel
Terry Lee Dill
Douglas C. Dillon
Arthur D. Emil
Aaron and Rosa Esmen
Harriet Feigenbaum
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Inc.
Jackie Ferrara
Fine Arts Planning Group
Alan Finkel
R.M. Fischer
Stephen Flanagan
Margot Frankel
Nina Freedman and Michael Rosenbaum

Suzanne Geller
Joe Giordano
Troy M. Giorgio
M. Milton Glass, PAIA
David and Pamela Glazer
The Doris and Arthur Gluck Foundation
Suzanne Gluck
Ann Chanin Gold
John Golomb
Sally Goodgold
Peter and Barbara Goodman
Hugh Hardy
Andrew Heiskell
Warren M. Heller
Nancy Hoffman Gallery
Mr. Gordon Hyatt
Linda B. Janovic
Richard A. Kahan
Mr. Harry Kahn
Alex and Ada Katz
John Kaufman
Tom Kenny
Michael Klein, Inc.
Harry and Nancy Koenigsberg
Vitaly Komar
Stephen C. Korns
Barbara Kulicke
Alvin S. Lane
John and Alison Lankenau
Raymond J. Learsy
Samuel Lebowitz
Donna Lewis
Sol LeWitt
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence List
Henry Luce III
Matthew J. Mallow and Ellen Chesler
Marcolini Wine & Liquor
Hamish and Georgene Maxwell
Ed Mayer
Edna Chanin Mayers
Kathryn McAuliffe
Branda Miller
Donna Miller
Mr. and Mrs. Lester S. Morse, Jr.
Roy R. and Marie S. Neuberger Foundation
M.S. Novik
Suzanne Opton
Jerry Ordovery
Lauren F. and Helen K. Otis
Naomi Paley
Mr. and Mrs. Frederic S. Papert
Phil and Bess Paulson
Li Chung Pei
Jody Pinto
Matthew A. Postal
Richard Prince
Emily Rauh Pulitzer
R&J Company
Lauren Reece and Michael Flaum
Ted and Betsy Rogers
Sal Romano
Robert Rosenfeld
Tony and Halina Rosenthal
Nanette P. Sachs
Irving Sandler
Norma H. Schlesinger
Axel Schupf
Barbara Schwartz
John D. Schwartz
Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz
Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr.
Phyllis and Michael Seelig
Muriel Silberstein-Storfer
Nancy and Andrew Sneider
Laura Sklar
E.L. Smyth, Inc.
Judith Spektor
Nancy Spero and Leon Golub
Henry J. Stern and Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Fund
Mrs. Donald Straus
Frederieke and Willard Taylor
Mr. and Mrs. David M. Teitelbaum
Lee Weintraub
Mr. and Mrs. L. Weisberg
Judith Weller
Margot Wellington
Arthur Weyhe
W. Hollingsworth Whyte III
Enid Silver Winslow
Daniel Wolf

As we go to press, our list of supporters continues to grow. Therefore, this listing is not complete for 1988.



Rae Langsten, *Monument to Homeless People*, Wards Island, New York, 1983, installation, mixed media, photo © Rae Langsten

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK, N.Y.
PERMIT NO. 03443

Public Art Fund Inc.
1285 Avenue of the Americas
3rd Floor
New York City 10019-6071
212 641-8423