

It's Only Temporary: Public Art and the Museum

Molly Rose Mandeltort

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

University of Washington

2016

Committee:

Kristine Morrissey

Leila Wilke

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Museology

© 2016

Molly Rose Mandeltort

University of Washington

**Abstract**

It's Only Temporary: Public Art and the Museum

Molly Rose Mandeltort

Chair of Supervisory Committee:

Kris Morrissey, PhD

Museology

This descriptive study examines the process of commissioning public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments—ie: sculpture gardens and site--specific public art installations—from the perspective of the museum. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with museum professionals from the Nasher Sculpture Center, the Hammer Museum, the Walker Art Center, and the Seattle Art Museum. Findings suggest that art installations sited outside the four walls of the institution are treated as an extension of the traditional gallery experience. Furthermore, there is an interest in using community-based practice to reach new publics, but the barriers to exhibiting these types of artworks are space limitations, lack of infrastructure to sustain community-based practice, and prohibitive costs in both the short- and long-term

**Table of Contents**

Table of Contents.....1

Acknowledgements.....2

Chapter One: Introduction.....3

Chapter Two: Literature Review.....7

Chapter Three: Methodology.....14

Chapter Four: Results.....19

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion.....37

References.....39

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....41

Appendix B: Code Book.....42

Appendix C: Glossary.....43

### **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without the constant love and support of my Chicago, Boston and Seattle families — especially KR, PS, SB, HS, KO, and my parents.

I am also grateful for the mentorship of my department chair, Dr. Kris Morrissey, and my committee member, Ms. Leila Wilke.

Many, many thanks to Michael McCafferty, Siri Engberg, Leslie Cozzi, January Parkos Arnall, and Jed Morse for answering my shouts out into the void.

## Chapter One: Introduction

In the courtyard of the Richard J. Daley Center in Chicago, there is a fifty-foot tall sculpture by Pablo Picasso. An untitled work known as “The Chicago Picasso,” the giant sculpture has been a well-known landmark since its installation in 1967. The artist himself referred to it as his “gift” to the city, and today both tourists and locals flock to it. This is not an unusual reaction to publicly-sited artwork. In fact, public art has been proven to have many benefits to communities and museums alike.

Public art is experiencing a burst of positive press these days, both in the public sector and in the Museology field. In the public sector, public art has drawn attention for being an indicator of cultural vitality. The Urban Institute defines cultural vitality as “evidence of creating, disseminating, validating, and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities” (Jackson, Kabwasa-Green & Herranz, 2006). Public art installations do not require a predisposition to seek out art. Instead, public art installations offer an immediate opportunity for cultural participation in addition to acting as emissaries for the institution. This concept of using art to infiltrate the public sphere and spark conversations is known as community-based practice.

In addition to being affiliated with cultural vitality, public art is also credited with supporting economic growth—as illustrated in the National Governors Association’s Center for Best Practices’ *Using Arts and Culture to Stimulate State Economic Development*. A 2011 American Planning Association report put it succinctly: “Unlike art in private spaces, public art is ideally site-specific and attuned to its social, economic, and environmental context. Public art can contribute to urban design and the revitalization of civic infrastructure; enhance and personalize public space; comment on environmental

and social conditions; and activate civic dialogue” (Hodgson, Soule & Beavers, 2011). Site-specific art is “formally determined or directed by its environment,” (Kwon, 2002, p. 11) with its site directly providing context and influencing the viewer’s interpretation of the work. This is in contrast to what is called autonomous public art, which can be sited anywhere—its installation inside or outside, in one community or another, does not change the context or the meaning of the work.

In the Museology field, numerous professional organizations are discussing the role of public art in their respective communities. The American Alliance of Museums’ Center for the Future of Museum’s 2015 Trendswatch, the 2015 “Public Art Year In Review” preconference at American’s for the Arts’ Annual Convention, panels at Art Basel 2012, and more have incited dialogues about the growing amount of public art being commissioned. Established journals such as *ArtForum*, *Curator*, and *Public Art Review* have published articles and examinations by prominent critics such as Hilde Hein and Cher Krause Knight on the concept, with copious federally- and privately-funded research showing the positive impact community-based practice and public art has on communities.

There are numerous institutions, organizations, and individuals with a vested interest in the site-specific public art commissioning process. The most commonly involved stakeholders are the museum, the community, and the artist—and there have been no shortage of controversies between the three in recent years. High profile clashes between stakeholders have led to legal battles (Phillips v. Pembroke Real Estate in 2006; Mass MoCA v. Büchel in 2007) and media uproars (the removal of Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* from Federal Plaza in 1981; the destruction of James Turrell’s *Tending (Blue)* from

the Nasher Sculpture Center in 2013), casting a pall over the site-specific public art commissioning process and highlighting the need for clarity as to what role the museum plays in conveying the community's needs to the artist and translating the artist's vision for the community.

This descriptive study will examine the process of commissioning public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments—ie: sculpture gardens and site-specific public art installations—from the perspective of the museum. My research questions “who do art museums commission site-specific public art for, and how is the process geared towards that motivation?” and “how do institutions define and measure success for publicly sited projects?” will allow me to identify the variables institutions consider at this intersection of the museum and the community, as well as offer insight into philosophies regarding community--based practice from institutions across the country. Ultimately, this research can be used to better understand the site-specific public art commissioning procedure, the motivations behind it, and the role of the institution in community-practice based projects. (“Community-based practice” meaning public engagement that takes place within the community and uses art as a catalyst for discussion.)

In a 2003 *Sculpture Magazine* article, Harriet Senie asserted that “public art attracts critical attention only when it is the subject of controversy” (Senie, 2003). It is my goal that this research will help quell the potential for controversy by serving as a tool for museums; after reading my research, institutions will better understand the parameters of their role in the various phases of the site-specific public art commissioning process. Moving forward, it is my hope that community-based art practice can attract critical

attention for its deep contextual meaning and the community dialogues it spurs rather than for igniting dissent amongst stakeholders.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Harriet Senie explains the issue of public art thusly: “It’s unlikely that public art will be recognized as *art* by critics, art institutions, and the general public until it is consciously reframed as *art*” (Senie, 2003)—and more often than not, public art is not consciously reframed. After all, *art* travels on the exhibition circuit, *art* garners reviews, *art* generates revenue; public art does none of that. By operating outside of the established museum and gallery system, public art also operates outside of the academic system, meaning there is little research devoted to the process of commissioning public art and even less on the process of commissioning site-specific public art.

### Defining Public Art: Autonomous v. Site-Specific

To understand the issues facing public art and the institutions that commission these works, it is important to recognize that there are two types of public art: autonomous and site-specific. Henry Moore famously said, “I don’t like doing commissions in the sense that I go and look at a site and then think of something. Once I have been asked to consider a certain place where one of my sculptures might possibly be placed, I try to choose something suitable from what I’ve done or from what I’m about to do. But I don’t sit down and try to create something especially for it” (Kwon, 2002). What he is describing is autonomous public art. Also known as “single object sculpture” (Senie, 2003), this type of artwork can be sited anywhere—its installation inside or outside, in one community or another, does not change the context or the meaning of the work.

Often, autonomous public art is a pre-existing piece or a work already in progress at the time of the commissioning that is sited publicly but does not reflect the installation

site or community. Popular examples of autonomous public art are the large-scale modernist abstract sculptures of Alexander Calder or the typographic wall installations of Lawrence Weiner. Alternatively, site-specific art is “formally determined or directed by its environment,” (Kwon, 2002) with its site directly providing context and influencing the viewer’s interpretation of the work. Sculpture gardens most often exhibit a mix of site-specific and autonomous artworks.

### Exhibiting Public Art: Integration v. Intervention

Traditionally, art is exhibited in a neutral setting such as a gallery or a museum, known in the field as *the white cube*. Brian O’Doherty asserts that “the white cube is usually seen as an emblem of the estrangement of the artist from a society to which the gallery also provides access” (O’Doherty, 1999, p. 80). In creating public art, artists reject this modernist construct and negate the need for an intermediary figure by communing directly with the public. Site-specific public art goes one step further, “reacting to [its] site, informed by the contents and materials of its actual location, whether they be industrially, “naturally,” or conceptually produced” (Suderburg, 2000, p. 4). This practice evolved out of earthworks—installations that claimed land as site, space, and content. Rosalind Krauss examined earthworks and their impact on the practice of sculpture in her seminal 1979 essay, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field.” According to Krauss, earthworks explored the concept of architecture plus *not-architecture*, landscape plus *not-landscape*. Site-specific public artworks build upon this complex notion of “marked sites” (Krauss, 1979, p. 30-44), situating themselves in the postmodern expanded field.

Because of this integral connection to an exact location or community, site-specific public art is more vulnerable to breeding a more contentious relationship between

its stakeholders than its autonomous cousin—particularly because these works react to their site by either integrating or intervening (the latter meaning the disrupt their location). Artist Richard Serra subscribes to this notion of intervening, using his installations as opportunities to disrupt a site in order to force behavioral changes and incite dialogues. He refers to the formalist tradition of removing the pedestal from the practice of making sculptures to elevate the artwork into what he calls the “behavioral space of the viewer” (Suderburg, 2000, p. 21). This technique is incredibly impactful, but has also been particularly controversial. His sculpture *Tilted Arc* was so disruptive to the public at Federal Plaza in New York City that it was removed in 1981 against his wishes, commencing major media coverage of the escalating situation.

### Public Art in Popular Culture

Art historian and Adjunct Curator of New Media Arts at the Whitney Museum of American Art Christiane Paul has said that “an important element in all public art is the varying degree of audience participation and agency [...] Degrees of agency are measured by the ability to have a meaningful effect in the word and in a social context” (Paul, 2008 p. 164). This concept of degrees of agency is presented as a definitive, quantifying method of measuring of engagement—and yet, it is increasingly open to interpretation. Though intervening site-specific artwork on the surface appears to be the more provocative method of engaging with a location, even integrative site-specific art can elicit a dramatic response. For example, James Turrell’s skyspaces are site-specific works that are integrated into the site but are contingent upon the site’s aesthetic stability. The sculpture offers a specific view of the sky, at an angle and location designed by the artist. However, with new construction going up around the campus, *Tending (Blue)* at the Nasher

Sculpture Center has been called “destroyed” and is closed to the public until the obstructing view of a 42-story condo building built adjacent to the museum can be resolved. To date, the Nasher is working with the artist and the architects of the offending condominium, posting a sign declaring “Turrell has created a new design for a skyspace on this site, which will eliminate Museum Tower from the viewer’s line of sight” outside of the closed sculpture in the interim.

In addition to high-profile media battles, site-specific public art has also made headlines in the legal community. Most commonly, artists bring suits under the Visual Artists Rights Act. Notably, site-specific art is not protected under VARA. Stanford University Law School professor John Henry Merryman commented on the issue to the art blog *Hyperallergic*, stating “Someday, the courts may reach the conclusion that moving a sculpture from one site to another violates its integrity, but it hasn’t happened yet” (Grant, 2014).

It was not until the 2006 court case between sculptor David Phillips and Pembroke Real Estate that the legal precedent was set that “the plain language of the law does not protect site-specific art” (Grant, 2014). The lawsuit came about after Phillips contested the removal and planned re-installation of his artwork in a park in the South Boston Waterfront District. Pembroke Real Estate was renovating the park and wanted to move the sculpture—originally commissioned for that specific location—to a new site. The Massachusetts Supreme Court concluded that the agency’s actions were legally permissible, and the U.S. Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court’s decision in 2006 (Grant, 2014).

The lawsuits brought forward regarding site-specific public art issues are not limited to artists bringing suits against institutions, and what does and does not fall under VARA is not always straightforward. In a well-publicized 2007 case, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art Foundation (Mass MoCA) filed a lawsuit against artist Christoph Büchel for the failure to complete a large-scale site-specific installation, “Training Ground for Democracy.” After it became clear that Büchel would not finish the work, Mass MoCA proposed exhibiting the partial work—which Büchel refused to permit. They went to court over this, to which Büchel responded by bringing counterclaims against the Museum. Büchel sought an injunction preventing MASS MoCA from displaying the unfinished installation and damages for Mass MoCA’s alleged violations of his rights under both VARA and the Copyright Act. In this case, the judge ruled that Büchel’s “moral rights” to the unfinished work were protected under VARA.

### State of the (Public) Art

Despite the abundance of negative press and costly court cases, new public artworks continue to be commissioned—and, indeed, the number of new commissions has risen in recent years at an impressive enough rate that This is question is particularly relevant to the field at this time, as the practice is widespread enough that the former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Bill Ivey, recently declared “Public art has improved the quality of life everywhere” (Fenner, 2011, p. 62). There are many factors that may contribute to this growth, but a major influence is the recent global interest in creative placemaking. Per a white paper for the Mayors’ Institute on City Design (a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts), creative placemaking urges partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors to

“shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities” (Markusen, 2010, p. 3). With the support of major arts funders such as the National Endowment of the Arts, the Kresge Foundation, and ArtPlace America, more arts institutions are working to “make substantial contributions to local economic development, livability, and cultural industry competitiveness” (Markusen, 2010, p. 6).

In this same spirit, private companies are commissioning works for their publicly accessible land—a tactic that has been particularly well-received by the public but is more problematic for those in the art world. Art critic Jerry Saltz sums up this phenomenon in a 2015 New York Magazine article entitled “New York Has Solved the Problem of Public Art. But at What Cost?” In the opinion piece Saltz asks, “So what am I supposed to do when cultural forces I loathe are responsible for something like a new golden age of public art, which I always felt was important, but also maybe something like impossible?” (Saltz, 2015).

In his article, Saltz raises the concern that major corporations and private funders—not art institutions or other public entities!—are the ones commissioning “successful” site-specific public artworks. This trend, coupled with the dearth of literature regarding the museum’s role in the public art commissioning process, suggests that there is a gap to be filled. Public institutions must reclaim the commissioning of site-specific public artworks. The field is aware of this need, as evidenced by the production of a new quarterly publication (*Public Art Dialogue*, the only academic journal dedicated to public art, launched in 2009) and the establishment of the annual “Public Art & Placemaking” preconference that takes place in the days before the Americans for the Arts yearly

convention. By examining the site-specific commissioning process at multiple institutions and looking at the variables those institutions consider when commissioning and installing a public artwork, this research seeks to add to the field's dialogue by answering the following questions:

- *Why do institutions exhibit public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments—ie: sculpture gardens and site--specific public art installations?*
- *What does the site-specific commissioning process look like?*
- *What are the variables the institution considers at this intersection of the museum and the community?*
- *How do museum define “success”*

Ultimately, this research will add to the dialogue around purposeful public art and provide an opportunity for institutions considering community-based practice to see how their peers are navigating the commissioning process.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

#### Goal and Research Questions

The goal of this research was to describe the role of the museum in the commissioning, stewardship, and interpretation of public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments. My research questions were:

1. Why do institutions exhibit public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments—ie: sculpture gardens and site--specific public art installations?
2. What does the site-specific commissioning process look like at this institution?
3. What are the variables the institution considers at this intersection of the museum and the community?
4. How do museum define “success” when it comes to public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments?

#### Methodology Approach

This research took a qualitative case study approach, using interviews. This approach is particularly relevant for this type of research because the research questions required museum professionals to reflect upon their experiences and interpret the constructs around the site-specific public art commissioning process (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). The research is framed by the case study research methodology laid out in Sharan Merriam’s 2009 text, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*.

### Sample

Individuals at the following institutions were interviewed: the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota; the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas; the Seattle Art Museum in Seattle, Washington; and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, California.

These institutions were purposively selected based on the following criteria:

- Have a history of exhibiting artworks formally determined or directed by their environments—ie: sculpture gardens and site--specific public art installations;
- Are internationally-regarded;
- Serve a metropolitan area with a population exceeding 400,000 residents;
- Were awarded monies from the National Endowment for the Arts in the last five years.

“Internationally-regarded” means the institution exhibits works by domestic and international artists and has been featured in press outside of the United States, implying there is an international audience for the institution. Likewise, the receiving monies from the NEA identifies that the research is looking at museums that have been deemed relevant domestically.

These institutions were selected using a Google search for *contemporary art museums USA + public art + site-specific*. The names of the museums from this search were then entered into the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding database. The list was narrowed down to museums from the original search that had received funding from the NEA within the last five years and were internationally-regarded. From that list of sites, individuals whose job responsibilities included the management of the site-

specific public art commissioning process will be contacted for interviews. Individuals were recruited via email and all protocol was approved by university IRB.

### Instrument

Interview questions were semi-structured in order to allow for flexibility, providing me with the opportunity to explore natural tangents that arose in conversations with the interviewees, while also collecting specific data from all respondents. (See Appendix A for instrument.) For example, one question asked if there was an ideal audience for their institution's site-specific public artworks, and if so, would they please describe that audience. Follow up questions asked whether the environment factored into the commissioning process, whether the role of the institution in the site-specific public art commissioning process changes after the work has been installed, and how the institution defined and measured success in terms of site-specific public art.

The following topics were probed if they did not come up naturally in the conversation: approximate number of site-specific public artworks in the institution's collection; approximate number of site-specific public artwork commissions currently in progress; and who is involved in the site-specific public artwork commissioning process?

### Interview Protocols

The interviews took place over the phone or in-person and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Two interviews took place using Zoom (a videoconferencing web-based software), two took place over the telephone, and one took place in person. All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed.

Of respondents, there were a range of titles and departments. The titles of interviewees included a Chief Curator; a Senior Curator of Visual Arts; a former Director of Exhibitions; a Curatorial Associate of Visual Arts; and a Curatorial Assistant of Public Engagement.

<b>Name of Institution</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Person/Position interviewed</b>	<b>Type of Interview</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Hammer Museum	Los Angeles, CA	January Parkos Arnall Curatorial Assistant of Public Engagement	Telephone	04.06.2016
Hammer Museum	Los Angeles, CA	Leslie Cozzi Curatorial Associate of Visual Arts	Telephone	03.30.2016
Nasher Sculpture Center	Dallas, TX	Jed Morse Chief Curator	Zoom	02.25.2016
Seattle Art Museum	Seattle, WA	Michael McCafferty former Director of Exhibitions	In person	04.15.2016
Walker Art Center	Minneapolis, MN	Siri Engberg Senior Curator of Visual Arts	Zoom	04.06.2016

### Analysis

All audio interviews and documents were uploaded to a research project file. Interviews were coded using emergent/inductive coding. (See Appendix B for coding chart.)

### Limitations

The results of this study have significant implications for institutions that exhibit site-specific public art. However, the results are limited to institutions that have a history of exhibiting artworks formally determined or directed by their environments; are internationally-regarded (defined here as exhibiting both domestic and international artists and receiving international press and/or awards); serve a metropolitan area with a population exceeding 400,000 residents; and were awarded monies from the National Endowment for the Arts in the last five years, and therefore may not generalize to all institutions that feature site-specific public art. In addition, not all institutions contacted for interviews responded to the request, and not all institutions contacted had a current employee able to speak to the past exhibiting of site-specific public art.

## Chapter Four: Results

### Summary

The goal of this research was to describe the role of the museum in the commissioning, stewardship, and interpretation of public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments. Participating museum professionals were asked about the following research questions:

1. Why do institutions exhibit public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments—ie: sculpture gardens and site--specific public art installations?
2. What does the site-specific commissioning process look like at this institution?
3. What are the variables the institution considers at this intersection of the museum and the community?
4. How do museum define “success” when it comes to public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments?

In addition to the four research questions that guided this research, four themes emerged during the coding process: goals, process, stakeholders, or terminology. “Goals” refers to the museum’s implied intentions for the project and explicitly stated desired outcomes. Interviewees’ comments were coded with this theme when they used the word goal or described the reasoning behind a decision. “Process” refers to the institutional infrastructure that supports the project (in this case, the exhibiting of public artworks determined or directed by their environments). Interviewees’ comments were coded with

this theme when they used the word process or described the physical layout of a space or the environment (either physical or institutional). “Stakeholders” refers to individuals or organizations that have direct influence on the project or are directly influenced by the project. Interviewees’ comments were coded with this theme when they used the word partnership or described those specifically involved in or affected by the project.

“Terminology” refers to concepts and language that the institution uses to describe the project, the site, the artworks, or their internal metrics. Interviewees’ comments were coded with this theme when they described a philosophy or term unique to the project or institution.

### Why Exhibit Public Artworks?

Research question one asked “Why do institutions exhibit public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments—ie: sculpture gardens and site-specific public art installations?” At the Walker Art Center and the Nasher Sculpture Center, interviews suggested that the choice to exhibit public artworks that are formally determined or directed by their environments is tied to the institution’s mission and history. Per Siri Engberg, the Walker’s commitment to exhibiting works in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is directly related to the line in their mission that promises the Walker will take a “diverse approach to the creation, presentation, interpretation, collection, and preservation of art.” Likewise, the Nasher’s outdoor exhibition program and commitment to community-based practice is drawn from their mission, which is in turn drawn from the legacy of their founders, Raymond and Patsy Nasher.

According to Jed Morse, prior to founding the sculpture center, the Nashers put art in unconventional public spaces and made it available the public. For the Seattle Art

Museum, exhibiting at the Olympic Sculpture Park offers an opportunity for “a permeable, improvisational, less institutional identity that is in keeping with the evolving character of the city” (Corrin, 2007, p. 26). The sculpture park’s creation was championed by then-Director Mimi Gardner Gates and, because it aligned with the Mayor of Seattle's interest in making the waterfront fully accessible, came to fruition relatively quickly. The Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden is the outlier in the data set, as the garden is not intrinsically tied to the Hammer Museum’s mission or factored into programming goals. Instead, the garden was the brainchild of former UCLA chancellor, Franklin D. Murphy. The site reflects Dr. Murphy’s love of beauty and belief that “a great university should possess and foster aesthetic virtue as well as intellectual excellence” (Burlingham, 2007, p. 19).

These institutions exhibit works outdoors and/or in the community specifically to bring their community-based practice to the target audience their institution has identified for their sculpture garden or public art installations. All four institutions interviewed said that they are trying to reach as broad of an audience as possible. The Walker, the Nasher, and the Seattle Art Museum consider their outdoor exhibitions and their programming audiences one and the same: tourists and locals alike, with special interest in reaching out to those communities within their respective cities that are not already attending exhibitions in their traditional gallery spaces. In this respect, community-based practice is used as a method for capturing an audience that would not have otherwise opted in to museum programming.

The Hammer, however, sees their target audience for their sculpture garden as very different from their target audience for their community-based practice. The

sculpture garden is meant for the community they are already serving: members of the UCLA community and those that live in their immediate vicinity. When the garden first opened, Dr. Murphy specifically said that the intended audience was “a sculptural community within an academic community” (Burlingham, 2007, p. 173) and the Hammer upholds this tradition. The museum’s goal audience for their community-based practice efforts is much more aligned with the other institutions interviewed, however; for those programs, the Hammer is looking at how a community is different or similar to the communities the Hammer is already serving and tries to go into communities not already being served.

### The Commissioning Process

Research question two asked, “What does the site-specific commissioning process look like at this institution?” An underlying philosophy is at the core of this process at each institution interviewed. The Walker “commissions work in the spirit of pushing artists to try something new or take their work to a new place” according to Siri Engberg. This is a tradition that began when the Walker opened in 1988 and continues to this day; in 1988, Deborah Butterfield was primarily known as an artist working inside with wood and the Walker gave her the opportunity to work in bronze outdoors. Now, with the unveiling of the 2017 renovation, Mark Munders will be installing his first major outdoor sculpture and Erin Spangler will be working in bronze for the first time. This philosophy informs the commissioning process, which is curatorially-based. The garden is considered an extension of what happens in the galleries and all of the works in the garden are part of the Walker’s permanent collection; decisions made around the artworks and commissions

that that are installed in the gallery are made just as the Walker does with any other works that go into the permanent collection of the museum.

In considering the layout of the garden, the Walker does not involve the community in the art commissioning process, but does take community input into consideration when it comes to designing green spaces and programming. During the design phase of the renovation process, the Walker received feedback from their Community Advisory Committee (featuring public and neighborhood representatives) that the public wanted more seasonal use of the garden and that they wanted more seasonal change with the plantings, so when the garden reopens in 2017, the plantings will have seasonal interest and there will be paths that are always plowed so that the public can experience the sculptures in snow during the long Minnesota winters. Furthermore, during the Community Advisory Committee meetings, the Walker learned that the public really enjoyed an open patch of land known as “the field,” so they are intentionally leaving an open space to allow for the community to continue using that area as they wish.

In terms of the layout of the sculptures themselves, there is no formal public involvement. Curators create what the Walker refers to as “groupings”—clusters of sculptures that, based on the way they are placed with one another, create a kind of dialogue. This approach allows the institution freedom to take some pieces off view, bring new works in, and move beloved pieces into new positions to allow for new connections to be made. This focus on mutability is crucial artistically, as well as logistically; the design allows for infrastructure upgrades such as drainage and irrigation repairs and landscaping upkeep like removing trees that have died.

The Nasher Sculpture Center is also designed in a way that makes refreshing the exhibition manageable. Driven by the 300 pieces in the permanent collection, the program for the building and the garden was created out of a partnership between the institution and the architect without garnering community input. Per Jed Morse, “the idea was always that even if we gave over the entire sculpture center—all of the galleries inside, the entire garden—just to the Nasher collection, we could still only show a third of it at any one time. So the idea was always that we always would be changing the installations on a regular basis, both inside and out. So it was designed so that we could fairly easily move sculpture in and out of the garden.”

With the exception of giants works by Richard Serra and Marc di Suvero (as well as a permanent site-specific piece by James Turrell) most of the pieces in the sculpture garden can be moved into new areas of the garden in order to create a new dialogue. Much like the Walker, the Nasher also counts their outdoor sculptures as part of their permanent collection and treats them as such—though there are pieces installed outside that are on loan or are affiliated with traveling exhibits that do not remain in the Nasher’s custody long-term. The curatorial team uses the same acquisition protocols for indoor and outdoor works, and treats the garden as a large-scale exhibition opportunity.

In addition to the sculpture garden, the Nasher also experiments with community-based practice. The most recent effort was called *Nasher XChange*, a public art exhibition consisting of ten newly-commissioned public sculptures by contemporary artists at ten sites throughout the city of Dallas in honor of the Nasher’s tenth anniversary. Jed Morse referred to the program as “an opportunity to introduce the Nasher Sculpture Center to communities around the city that didn’t naturally come downtown to the arts district to

seek out art, which is the great thing about putting art in the public space.” The project was treated like a regular museum exhibition in that it was a curated program. The Nasher curatorial team identified artists that represented different ways of working in the public realm and approached them individually about creating site-specific works. Sites ranged the full length and breadth of the city in order to diversify the locations and the kinds of communities where these projects would take place, so the invited artists were able to choose the space that most inspired them.

Seattle Art Museum’s Olympic Sculpture Park design, likewise, is the result of a partnership between the institution and the architect. The topography required finessing to be ready to install the sculptures, and many structural issues needed to be taken into account before the artwork could be sited. Much like the Walker’s concept of “groupings,” the Seattle Art Museum divided the parcel of land into “precincts”—the meadow, the valley, and the shore. Treating the garden the same way as one would a traditional indoor gallery, the exhibition is curated and the sculptures are sited based on their relationship to one another. The team was very deliberate when placing each work, so to keep the precinct feeling balanced on a micro level, as well as overall. Each precinct has one or two monumental works that act as anchors for the space, with small and medium size sculptures filling in the area as appropriate. The collection itself is a mix of works especially commissioned for the Olympic Sculpture Park, site-specific works, and autonomous works gifted to the site by donors. The collection is considered open and, according to Michael McCafferty, the collection will be added to, “pieces will rotate. Several pieces are merely on loan, so they will be leaving. New art will be coming in.” Though all of these plans are dependent on what time and money there can be budgeted.

The sculpture park associated with the Hammer Museum at UCLA also features a mixed collection, though there are no site-specific works there. Unlike the other three institutions interviewed, the Hammer does not consider their outdoor collection an open collection. The last piece added to the garden was added in 1991. The layout of the garden and the curation of the works therein is the singular vision of Dr. Murphy, reflecting his “long-standing love of public art [...] and informed by his own instincts as a collector” (Burlingham, 2007, p. 21). The Hammer is not involved in the design, artistic content, or the programming of the garden; instead, their goal is, according to Leslie Cozzi, to “maintain the historic integrity of the garden” and honor the legacy of former UCLA chancellor Franklin Murphy, for whom the garden is named.

The Hammer has found other ways to exhibit public art, which it does through its burgeoning community-based practice. Per January Parkos Arnall, the Hammer doesn't “have the money or the infrastructure to support multi-year, intensive projects. So it's really about engaging, and we want to engage but not in a disingenuous way. We're a two-person department! We can't go into a community and reside there—which is what we think is necessary to best serve a community-based practice.” Based on the success of their re-staging of Richard Artschwager's *blps* in conjunction with his retrospective show, the Hammer has created an artist residency program that allows artists the opportunity to consider the Hammer as a site, with the intention that with infrastructure and funding in place, the residency will ultimately have the freedom to move off-site. At the Hammer, the genesis for programs is bringing in an artist to engage with the museum and with the public. Taking a curatorial approach to public engagement, the Hammer welcomes open proposals and, as an artist-centered institution, listens to the artist. If what the artist

proposes is of interest and fits with staff capacity, a program is built around what they want to do. The residencies generally run three to six months in duration, though the inaugural residency lasted twelve months.

Furthermore, the Hammer has extended its presence in the community by leveraging a partnership with a local organization called Art + Practice. The Hammer's first big public engagement collaboration, Art + Practice already had deep roots in the Leimert Park community—a neighborhood that the Hammer was interested in reaching—and an invitation to apply for an Irvine grant. This collaboration was, according to January Parkos Arnall, “the first time it made sense for the Hammer to go off- site. We were interested in pursuing a partnership with the organization (rather than, say, a commission) because we know if we go in with Art + Practice, the program can outlast the Hammer's involvement.” The programming that came out of this partnership was created by members of the Hammer's curatorial team and is implemented in the Leimert Park neighborhood of Los Angeles.

### Stakeholders

Research question three asked, “What are the variables the institution considers at this intersection of the museum and the community?” All four museums interviewed had numerous—and sometimes competing—stakeholders involved in the planning, implementation, and management of their community-based practice projects. The Walker is in charge of the sculpture and programming in the Minneapolis Sculpture Park, but they manage the land in conjunction with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. In this arrangement, the Park Board takes care of the park land and maintains all of the plantings. The community is another stakeholder, as the park (and the anchor work at its center,

Claes Oldenburg's gigantic *Spoonbridge and Cherry*) has become an icon over the years, a space that the city truly has taken ownership of. Because of these stakeholders, the Walker thinks of itself as, per Siri Engberg, "a nurturing and encouraging figure, providing a platform for and the space to allow people to explore and design their own experiences." This role is backed by the fact that the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is actually on land owned by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board.

There are fewer stakeholders in the mix at the Nasher, but a prevailing concept drives the entire institution: that it was created to be a place for viewing modern and contemporary sculpture. The museum's role is to make that goal possible, and that manifests in making introductions (between the museum and the city, the city and the artist, and even the city to itself). In addition to acting as a facilitator to make art possible, the museum is also responsible for the upkeep of works of art that it installs off-site. In particular, many of the host sites for works from the Nasher XChange were not equipped to take care of the artworks, so the Nasher managed those relationships and the required conservation.

A major source of tension for the Nasher is their lack of space. Space has been at a premium even before the museum opened its doors. During the planning phase, the organization realized that even if the institution gave over the entire sculpture center—all of the galleries inside, the entire garden—just to the Nasher collection (300 objects, primarily sculptures), the institution could still only show a third of it at any one time. Knowing that they were located in a dense urban space with only 10,000 square feet of indoor exhibition space and 1.2 acres of garden, the Nasher had to face the reality that their site does not often allow for permanent conditions. This factored into their

exhibitions policy that allows them to swap works in and out of the garden to tell new narratives, but it also had an impact on whether or not they could install site-specific works. The lone site-specific work in the permanent collection was commissioned to celebrate the opening of the institution. The piece, a skyspace by James Turrell called *Tending (Blue)*, was constructed at the back of the garden and has since been declared destroyed by the artist because of the construction of a 42-story luxury condominium tower next to the site that is permanently visible through the aperture of the skyspace. Because the artist's intention is to eliminate the viewer's depth perception, once the tower next door got to a certain point in its construction, the Nasher had to close the work to the public—a decision that Jed Morse called one of the “pitfalls of creating permanent works of art in dense urban spaces.”

By closing the work, the Nasher fulfilled its obligation to the artist, but did have to disappoint some visitors who were expecting to engage with the work. This juggling of stakeholders is a major part of any community-based practice. The Seattle Art Museum's relationship to the Olympic Sculpture Park is more similar to the Walker's relationship to the Minneapolis Sculpture Park than it is to the Nasher's situation. For the Olympic Sculpture Park, there were many stakeholders, both private and public, that needed to be considered and consulted before moving ahead. The Trust for Public Land, the City of Seattle, and many private donors had vested interests in how the project moved ahead, so the museum had to manage those relationships carefully during the planning process. In particular, they had to be very creative in order to solve the topography challenges and think ahead to provide for the future, especially in regards to sustainability and safety. Upon the public opening of the park, the Seattle Art Museum also added welcoming the

public and “introducing visitors to the history of the medium and kindle an appreciation that enriches their experience at the park” (Corrin, 2007, p. 32) to their plate of duties.

The Hammer’s duties to the sculpture garden are very specific, as there are many variables and stakeholders to take into account and each role is well defined. The Hammer solely acts as an administrator for the garden, acting in best interest of the artworks and the UCLA community. Their jurisdiction is limited to the works within the garden itself, not any other works sited on UCLA’s grounds. The rest of the UCLA campus art collection is maintained by the UCLA facilities team. With its community-based practice, however, the Hammer must consider their audience, the commissioning artist, and a number of their organizational partners. A major hindrance to building a larger community-based practice portfolio is the lack of infrastructure to support multi-year, intensive projects. According to January Parkos Arnall, the Hammer is interested in engaging with the public off-site in a genuine way, but are wary to launch a program without being able to make and sustain a real investment in the community.

### Defining Success

Research question four asked “How do museum define “success” when it comes to public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments?” Three of the four individuals interviewed acknowledged that there had not been a concentrated effort at their museums to create evaluative measures specifically for their sculpture garden or other community-based practice. The professionals interviewed also felt that there was a lack of common language surrounding this topic, making evaluation even more difficult. Regarding the common terminology, everyone had different words for the same concepts. For example, at SAM the way the site is segmented is referred to as precincts, whereas at

the Walker they are referred to as groupings. This particular difference may be intuitive for professionals, but it is indicative of a deeper issue. January Parkos Arnall at the Hammer clarified the issue succinctly: “Especially when it comes to public engagement and public practice and site-specificity...we’re all learning a new language.” She also pointed out that the Hammer deliberately named their department the Public Engagement department in order to recognize their capacity.

Though none of the institutions involved in this study shared evaluative measure tactics, all noted that attendance numbers were not the ideal way to measure success in this realm. The reason that attendance numbers were not viewed as a good measure of success for their site is that for many, the locations in question are open during daylight hours and are, for the most part, monitored with an eye towards visitor safety rather than visitor engagement. Complicating this metric for community-based practice: intention matters. For Nasher XChange, the Nasher installed a work in a local shopping mall. Not all visitors to the mall were there to see the art installation, so getting an accurate count of engaged visitors is impossible.

That is not to say that these institutions are not thinking about attendance numbers, it is just that attendance is only a small piece of a larger puzzle. The Walker does look at attendance, but it also looks to the number of field trips booked per year (as the garden is important part of the curriculum for a number of Minneapolis and St Paul public schools); quality of visit; and community response. The Nasher also looks at subjective, qualitative measurements over attendance numbers. Community response; whether the outdoor exhibition is creating an infrastructure for maintaining relationships; quality of visit; and

fundraising numbers are all used to calculate whether the garden and the community-based practice is successful—though metrics are project specific.

The Seattle Art Museum looks at community response and programmatic support as indicators in addition to attendance numbers rather than in lieu of. Michael McCafferty pointed to the diversity of programming to illustrate this point: “There’s been rock concerts here, parties in the park - all kinds of scheduled big activity. Yoga on that terrace.” But the safety of the artwork and the safety of visitors is also taken into account when measuring success; the Seattle Art Museum was the only institution interviewed that specifically mentioned safety as a measure of success. Overall, the site is used as another venue option for the museum’s programming and the artworks themselves are not specifically being evaluated.

Much like the Walker and the Nasher, the Hammer shies away from using visitor numbers to indicate success. Nor does the Hammer use one set of metrics for each of their evaluation areas. They try to be specific and responsive to the experience of the public when talking about success internally, avoiding using “number served” as a metric in favor of focusing on the experiences of the people served, even if it was only two people. For their community-based practice and their artist residency program, the Hammer measures the level of visitor engagement using surveys, interviews, and staff observations to measure success.

The concept of genuine engagement is one that all four institutions identified when touching on their site’s relationship to their host city. For the Walker, the garden has become a sustainability narrative for the local community. The land the Minneapolis Sculpture Park is on was formerly a marsh-like area, which the Walker designed to be

sustainable and responsible in terms of water management in addition to serving as a showcase for art. In terms of larger range, the garden has become an icon for Minnesota tourism and a point of pride for the city.

In much the same way, the Nasher used Nasher XChange as what Jed Morse called an opportunity “for the Nasher Sculpture Center to get out into the city, but also as an opportunity to introduce the city to itself,” using the program’s broad geographic spread to “touch communities from a broad swath of the socioeconomic hierarchy or structure of the city.” Giving the local community an iconic garden to be proud of and feel welcome in has become a major element of the museum.

The Seattle Art Museum’s Olympic Sculpture Park is also an iconic location for tourist and locals alike. The artworks are arranged in dialogue with each other, as well as in dialogue with the shoreline and the city’s other iconic structure: the Space Needle. The garden’s signature piece, Alexander Calder’s *Eagle*, is sited at the center of the park and oriented so that it appears to be conversing with both the city and the waterfront.

While the Olympic Sculpture Park and the other two institutions discussed are interested in finding new ways to have sculptures converse with each other and spark new dialogues for visitors, the Hammer’s sculpture garden is designed to stand stoic and alone. A pocket of solitude on a busy campus, the site is marked by a distinct lack of conversation. Works are arranged in such a way that visitors only interact with one piece at a time and, if they are so inclined, can contemplate them in an uninterrupted manner. This was the intention of Dr. Murphy when he designed the garden. Per Cynthia Burlingham’s comprehensive text on the garden, Dr. Murphy was hoping to create a space for quiet reflection in an area of absolute beauty, in accordance with his belief that “a

great university should possess and foster aesthetic virtue as well as intellectual excellence” (Burlingham, 2007, p. 19).

### Discussion

Exhibiting art formally determined or directed by its environment comes with a different set of challenges than installing works within a traditional white cube setting. As evidenced by the community-based practice at the Walker Art Center, the Nasher Sculpture Center, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Hammer Museum, institutions are eager to exhibit works outside the institution’s four walls in order to attract new audiences and contribute to the cultural vitality of their communities. However, interviews with professionals from these four leading institutions also uncovers areas where there is still work to be done. Museums do not always have the infrastructure to build sustainable community-based practices, nor do they have an agreed upon language for discussing or evaluating their programs. Successful community-based practice requires agreement between stakeholders as to the institution’s role; a clear philosophy driving the exhibition program forwards; and a commitment to authentic, responsive public engagement.

Of the four individuals interviewed, three treated the outdoor installations as extensions of their indoor gallery programming and sourced artworks through a predominantly curatorial approach. There was a strong focus on commissioning new works, though site-specific pieces and autonomous sculptures were also represented. Site-specific pieces were less popular from a logistics perspective, as they require space (which is at a premium) and their immobility limits the directions the curatorial team can move in the future. Those same three institutions sited works deliberately so that the pieces would be in conversation with each other and their surroundings; those same three institutions

were also the museums that reported that their role in the garden was more than purely administrative.

The one institution with a closed garden collection took a different approach than the others due to its view that the sculpture garden was a historic site rather than an active site. However, that institution's approach to community-based practice (and the goals articulated for that program) mirrored the other three institutions' approaches to their respective gardens and community-based programming. This is noteworthy, as it demonstrates that the way museums approach exhibiting public works is a replicable model and does not necessarily require spare acreage to implement. In surveying these four institutions, community-based practice is achievable through well-leveraged partnerships; making strategic choices based on existing infrastructure, available resources, and the target audience; and putting a focus on authentic engagement and making room for innovation.

### Limitations

The results of this study are limited to institutions that have a history of exhibiting artworks formally determined or directed by their environments; are internationally-regarded; serve a metropolitan area with a population exceeding 400,000 residents; and were awarded monies from the National Endowment for the Arts in the last five years, and therefore may not generalize to all institutions that feature site-specific public art. In addition, not all institutions contacted for interviews responded to the request, and not all institutions contacted had a current employee able to speak to the past exhibiting of site-specific public art. Furthermore, the responses of the museum professionals

interviewed are not representative of the viewpoints of all staff members at their institution or elsewhere.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

### Conclusions

Using semi-structured interviews with museum professionals at leading art institution, this study considered why and how institutions exhibit public artworks formally determined or directed by their environments, as well as the variables they consider during that process and how they define success. Findings from these conversations suggest that art installations sited outside the four walls of the institution are treated as an extension of the traditional gallery experience. Furthermore, there is an interest in the field in using community-based practice to reach new publics, but the barriers to exhibiting these types of artworks are space limitations, lack of infrastructure to sustain community-based practice, and prohibitive costs in both the short- and long-term. Interviewees, suggest that, in order to implement community-based practice, an institution must leverage partnerships, make strategic choices, and remain flexible both artistically and programmatically.

### Recommendations for Future Research

In the Spring/Summer 2011 issue of Public Art Review, Jack Becker wrote “There is a dearth of research efforts focusing on public art and its impact. The evidence is mostly anecdotal. Some attempts have focused specifically on economic impact, but this doesn’t tell the whole story, or even the most important stories” (Becker, 2011, p. 11). The findings of this study support this statement, indicating that the realm of sculpture gardens, site-specific art, and community-based practice is rich with opportunities for future study. As noted by the respondents, there is no commonly agreed

up terminology for discussing this sector, nor is there an evaluative framework available. For museum professionals interested in starting their own community-based practice, there is a lack of information around the infrastructure required to implement a sustainable model. These three areas appear to be where there is a most pressing need for research, but expanding this study to encapsulate a larger sample size would also be useful for the field as more and more institutions look for meaningful ways to engage their communities both on- and off-site.

### References

- Becker, J. (2011). The Gospel of Public Art. *Public Art Journal*, 22(2), 11.
- Burlingham, C. (2007). *The Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA*.  
Los Angeles: Hammer Museum.
- Corrin, L. G. (2007). *Olympic Sculpture Park*. Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum.
- Fenner, L. (2011). Conference Report: Public Art 360. *Public Art Journal*, 22(2), 62.
- Grant, D. (2014, November 26). Why "Site-Specific" Isn't So Specific. Retrieved  
January 24, 2016, from <http://hyperallergic.com/158338/why-site-specific-isnt-so-specific/>
- Hodgson, K., Soule, J., & Beavers, K. (2011). *Community Character* (Issue brief No. 3).  
Retrieved January 24, 2016, from [https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy\\_resources/research/arts/briefingpapers/pdf/character.pdf](https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/research/arts/briefingpapers/pdf/character.pdf)
- Jackson, M. R., Kabwasa-Green, F., & Herranz, J. (2006, December 15). *Cultural Vitality in Communities: Interpretation and Indicators* (Rep.). Retrieved January  
24, 2016, from [http://www.urban.org/research/publication/cultural-vitality-communities-interpretation-and-indicators/view/full\\_report](http://www.urban.org/research/publication/cultural-vitality-communities-interpretation-and-indicators/view/full_report)
- Kwon, M. (2002). *One place after another: Site-specific art and locational identity*.  
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Krauss, R. (1979). Sculpture in the Expanded Field. *October*, 8, 30-44.
- O'Doherty, B. (1999). *Inside the white cube: The ideology of the gallery space*. Berkeley:  
University of California Press.

- Paul, C. (2008). Digital Art/Public Art: Governance and Agency in the Networked Commons. *The Art and Science of Interface and Interaction Design Studies in Computational Intelligence, 1*, 163-185.
- Markusen, A., & Gadwa, A. (2010). *Creative placemaking: An executive summary* (Rep.). National Endowment for the Arts. Retrieved January 23, 2016, from <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>.
- Saltz, J. (2015, December 17). New York Has Solved the Problem of Public Art. But at What Cost? Retrieved January 24, 2016, from <http://www.vulture.com/2015/12/how-new-york-solved-the-problem-of-public-art.html>
- Senie, H. (2003, December). Responsible Criticism: Evaluating Public Art. *Sculpture Magazine*, 22(10).
- Sudenburg, E. (2000). *Space, site, intervention: Situating installation art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

### Interview Guide

1. Please describe the process of commissioning a site-specific public artwork at your institution.
2. Is there an ideal audience for your institution's site-specific public artworks? If so, please describe.
3. Does the audience factor into the commissioning process?
4. Does the role of the institution in the site-specific public art commissioning process change after the work has been installed? If so, in what ways?
5. Throughout the process, what are the institution's responsibilities to the piece? To the artist? To the public? Do these responsibilities change after the piece has been installed?
6. In terms of site-specific public art, how does your institution define and measure success?
7. Is there anything else you would like to say?

*The following topics will be probed if they do not come up naturally in the conversation:*

- Approximate number of site-specific public artworks in the institution's collection
- Approximate number of site-specific public artwork commissions currently in progress
- Who is involved in the site-specific public artwork commissioning process?

**Appendix B: Code Book**

DATA POINT	ALIGNED RESEARCH QUESTION(S)	ALIGNED THEME(S)
Metrics for success	1, 4	Goals, Terminology
Why each institution exhibits outdoor works	1	Goals
The museum's role	2, 3	Process, Stakeholders
Is the collection open or closed?	2	Process
The museum's goal audience for their outdoor works	1, 3	Goals, Stakeholders
How the layout of the garden was determined	2	Process
Identified tensions	2, 3	Process, Stakeholders
How each institution defines terms	4	Terminology
The outdoor works' relationship to the city	3, 4	Stakeholders, Terminology

### Appendix C: Glossary

**Public art:** Art in any media that has been planned and executed with the intention of being staged in the physical public domain.

**Site-specific:** Artwork formally determined or directed by its environment; its site directly provides context and influences the viewer's interpretation of the work.

**Autonomous:** Single object sculpture; artwork that can be sited anywhere—the installation location does not change the context or the meaning of the work.

**Public engagement:** A program in which the visitor steps outside of the traditional observer role and becomes an active participant.

**Public practice:** Work situated in and activated by the public realm, often impacting the public sphere.

**Community-based practice:** Public engagement that takes place within the community and uses art as a catalyst for discussion.