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**PUBLIC ART: A CRITICAL APPROACH**

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## ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I provide a philosophical analysis of public art. I focus on its “publicness,” and draw implications at the level of public art’s ontology, appreciation, and value. I uphold the view that an artwork is public when received within a public sphere rather than within artworld institutions. I further argue that, as a consequence of the peculiar nature of its reception, public art possesses an essential value that is distinctively non-aesthetic: to promote political participation and to encourage tolerance. By examining how public art and its value(s) relate to the public domain in the context of pluralistic democracies, this dissertation also contributes to a fuller understanding of an important aspect of our social world.

Chapter 1 introduces the scope and nature of the dissertation and emphasizes few important caveats. Chapter 2 develops a general characterization of public art’s “publicness.” It argues that what makes an artwork public is the context within which it is received: *public* artworks are received within a public sphere, that is, the *public-art sphere*, rather than within artworld institutions. Chapter 3 expands the account of the public-art sphere as developed in Chapter 2, and argues that public artworks address a multiplicity of publics and are received within a multiplicity of public-art spheres. Chapter 4 offers a sustained account of the pluralistic logic by means of which participants evaluate opinions expressed in discussions within public-art sphere. Chapter 5 explores the role that emotional reactions play in public-art spheres. It argues that warranted emotional reactions can function as premises of arguments proposed in public-art spheres. Chapter 6 discusses the ontology of public artworks. It suggests that some of the *real* properties that a public artwork has are a function of some features of the public-art sphere within which that artwork is received. Chapter 7 explains the value of public art. It holds that public art’s value is a function of its capacity to promote political participation and to encourage tolerance.

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*To my late friend Paolo,  
who first told me about the value of public art*

*Public art is the public transfigured:  
it is us, in the medium of artistic transformation*

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– ARTHUR C. DANTO



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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION:

### Like a tiger in a barnyard

On September 14 2013, the 13th Istanbul Biennial, entitled *Mom, Am I Barbarian?* opened its door to the public.<sup>1</sup> Curator Fulya Erdemci planned the exhibition as a forum where citizens could engage with public artworks designed to raise awareness about some of the most pressing issues afflicting Turkey. In particular, Erdemci aimed at stimulating a reflection and a discussion on the use of public space in Istanbul and, more generally, in Turkey. As the opening statement of the Biennial says:

*Mom, am I barbarian?*, borrowing its title from poet Lale Müldür's book, focuses on the theme of public space as a political forum. The biennial exhibition aspires to open up a space to rethink the concept of 'publicness' through art and elicit imagination and innovative thought to contribute to social engagement and discussion.<sup>2</sup>

Originally, Erdemci intended to use a wide range of public places and locations as exhibition venues. Venues included, along the outdoor spaces of

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<sup>1</sup>See R. Donadio, "A Canvas of Turmoil During Istanbul Biennial," *The New York Times* (September 13, 2013) <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/arts/design/a-canvas-of-turmoil-during-istanbul-art-fair.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>>.

<sup>2</sup>See the IKSv Biennial website at <<http://bienal.iksv.org/en/archive/newsarchive/p/1/814>>.

Taksim Square and Gezi Park, public buildings such as courthouses, schools, military structures or post offices; abandoned transportation hubs such as train stations; ex-industrial sites such as warehouses, and dockyards; and, even commercial and residential buildings such as shopping malls, hotels, and condos.<sup>3</sup>

But then in May 2013, Taksim Square and Gezi Park became the theater of violent riots that broke out in the city and spread throughout the whole country.<sup>4</sup> The protests were set off by anger at how urban development was managed by public authorities. The violent repression of the protests by the Turkish government affected profoundly Erdemci and the other organizers of the Biennial. In a news post on the Biennial website, Erdemci described their reactions as follows:

when we questioned what it meant to realize art projects with the permissions of the same authorities that do not allow the free expression of its citizens, we understood that the context was going through a radical shift that would sideline the reason d'être of realising these projects. Accomplishing these projects that articulate the question of public domain in urban public spaces under these circumstances might contradict their essence and purpose ...<sup>5</sup>

As a consequence of those considerations, Erdemci decided to move the exhibitions "inside": open spaces were substituted with more traditional artistic venues such as the art gallery *Arter*.<sup>6</sup>

Erdemci's words do not simply testify to the existence of a complex relationship that connects public art with public spaces and the political life of contemporary societies. They also suggest difficult questions: questions whose importance is emphasized by the international echo that the story of the Is-

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<sup>3</sup>See <<http://bienal.iksv.org/en/archive/newsarchive/p/1/622>>.

<sup>4</sup>See, for instance, C. Dewey, "A Guide to What's Going on in Istanbul's Gezi Park," *The Washington Post* (May 31, 2013) <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/05/31/a-guide-to-whats-going-on-in-istanbuls-gezi-park/>>.

<sup>5</sup>"Fulya Erdemci's statement," *www.biennialfoundation.org* (August 22, 2013) <<http://www.biennialfoundation.org/news/>>.

<sup>6</sup>See <<http://www.arter.org.tr>>.

tanbul Biennial has had. Did that sudden change from outdoor spaces to inside and more traditional venues affect the nature of the artworks exhibited? By being moved inside of an art gallery, did the chosen objects in display become something other than public artworks? Did they transform into “regular” (non-public) artworks? Did the presentation in an art gallery affect the appropriate way of appreciating and responding to those artworks? Did it affect their properties and “meanings”? Did it have an impact on their value(s)? By being placed inside of an art gallery, did those artworks become less significant?

The difficulty of those questions stems from a series of distinctively philosophical puzzles that arise when we engage with public artworks. And, in particular, those puzzles seem all to gravitate around an issue that has traditionally been a major concern for scholars of public art, namely, “What does it mean for an artwork to be public?” In this dissertation, I concentrate on the public dimension of public art, that is, on its “publicness,” placing it in the context of a general account of public art, and tracing important implications for what pertains public art’s ontology, appreciation, and, more importantly, value. I should emphasize that this dissertation does not simply aim at solving aesthetic or artistic enigmas: by examining how public art and its value(s) relate to the public domain, this dissertation also contributes to a fuller understanding of an important aspect of the world wherein we live.

This dissertation is an exercise in philosophical aesthetics, as it develops a philosophical account of public art and its value(s). And, I should emphasize, it is the first attempt to develop a sustained philosophical account of public art.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, it is not an exercise in art criticism or history. Though discussing a selection of actual examples of public art to develop and to illustrate the philo-

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<sup>7</sup>In the Anglo-American philosophical debate, public art is addressed only in few books and papers. Among those, see G. Graham, “Can There Be Public Architecture?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64 (2006): 243-249; H. Hein, *Public Art: Thinking Museums Differently* (Lanham, MD: Altamira, 2006); H. Hein, G. Horowitz, and M. Kelly, “Symposium: Public Art,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 1-22; L. Zuidervaart, *Art in Public: Politics, Economics, and a Democratic Culture* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

sophical points that I wish to make, this dissertation focuses on deeper issues about the nature of public art, its ontology, appreciation, and value.

It is more difficult to draw a distinction between the philosophical work that I do here and theories of public art.<sup>8</sup> And I do not see any strong reason to argue that there is a principled discontinuity between previous works on the theory of public art and this dissertation. Perhaps, it is possible to see a peculiarity of this thesis' approach in the focus and style of its argument. It introduces within the discussion of public art concerns, themes, and resources that conventionally belong to Anglo-American philosophy of art, whereas the theory of public art has been generally influenced by so-called Continental philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

Though rooted in philosophical aesthetics, the approach of this thesis is deeply interdisciplinary. It is true that often times aesthetics is interdisciplinary for its natural contiguity with other artistic disciplines such as art theory, art history, and art criticism—disciplines from which this dissertation draws extensively. However, when connecting with disciplines outside the studies of the arts, aestheticians make generally use of insights from the “sciences of the mind,” and in particular from cognitive-sciences, psychology, and neurosciences. On the contrary, this work draws consistently from a different set of theoretical and empirical disciplines that are more “socially oriented” such as political theory, social and political science, sociology, and communication studies.

The fact that this dissertation discusses social scientific and political literature, and addresses issues that are closely related to cultural policy should not mislead the reader. Without a doubt, this work is particularly sensitive to real-

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<sup>8</sup>Among works in public art theory that have influenced my view, see, among others, D. Boros, *Creative Rebellion for the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Public and Interactive Art to Political Life in America* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2012); T. Finkelpearl (ed.), *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); G. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004); C. K. Knight, *Public Art: Theory, Practice, and Populism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Art and the Public Sphere* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); A. Raven (ed.), *Art in the Public Interest* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989); H. F. Senie and S. Webster (eds.), *Critical Issues in Public Art* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 1998).

<sup>9</sup>The works of French philosopher Jacques Rancière are quite popular among academic discussants of public art. Also, Marcuse's views on art inform the debate.

life scenarios, and discusses for the most part puzzles that emerge in response to actual controversies of public art. However, its approach is theoretical and normative rather than merely empirical and descriptive. In effect, this dissertation is particularly concerned with developing a conceptual framework for understanding public art. By developing what one can call as an ideal-typical analysis of the reception of public art, this dissertation can be seen also as offering an utopian model that could help us optimize our practices of public art towards a full realization of their potential value.

This dissertation deals only with “official” public art realized after the 1960s and presented within the context of pluralistic democracies, with a focus on American and Italian art. In the category of “official” public art, one can find primarily works of visual art legally authorized: monuments, public sculptures, memorials, enduring and temporary installations, and so on. But there are also works that can be classified as (or include) performances. In this thesis I am particularly concerned with artworks and artists associated with the artistic movement(s) of “new genre public art” (also called as dialogue-based public art, dialogic art, relational art, contextual art, participatory art, community-based, activist art). Artists that I examine include Maya Lin, Suzanne Lacy, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Artur Silva, Maurizio Cattelan, Pino Castagna, and Oliviero Rainaldi.

There are good reasons for limiting my discussion to public art realized after the 1960s, and to put an emphasis on new genre public art. Since the late 1960s, the creation of local and national art programs in the US such as the first Percent for Public Art ordinance in Philadelphia (1959), the GSA’s Art in Architecture Program (1963), and, the NEA’s Art in Public Places program (1965) gave new impetus and life to public art.<sup>10</sup> The creation of those programs did not sim-

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<sup>10</sup>The history of public art legislation in Italy is much more complicated and filled with grey areas. To address adequately this topic would require a work of its own. The first law for arts in public buildings, the law n. 717, was approved on July 29, 1949. It requires that the budget for all new publicly funded buildings set aside 2% for artworks. The law is often cited as an example of a law often overlooked, and that favors an anti-democratic use of artworks. See, for instance, U. Giuliani, “Legge ‘del due per cento’: ipotesi di riforma,” *Exibart* (January

ply promote the production of public artworks, but also encouraged further reflections on “philosophical precepts about the nature and function of public art”.<sup>11</sup> The changes that followed those reflections provoked a “paradigm shift” in contemporary practices of public art and their theories. Such a shift found its groundbreaking expression in a famous collection of essays edited by Suzanne Lacy: *Mapping the Terrain*. In that collection, contributors formulate the principles of a new conception of public art, labelled as “new genre public art.” What distinguishes new genre public art from more conventional forms of public art is its emphasis on public engagement, that is, on developing an “art that interacts with a large, diverse audience and concerns issues relevant to their lives.”<sup>12</sup> By considering its peculiarities, it is prudent not to automatically extend what one can say about new genre public art to other forms of public art. Indeed, I would hope that some aspects of my analysis could pertinently inform further researches on different forms of public art or on arguably related genres.

I opt to focus on “official” public art since I believe that the complications that “unofficial” public art, that is, street art, introduces may very well require a significant theoretical adjustment and a separate treatment.<sup>13</sup> When talking about street art, I intend things like graffiti, stencil graffiti, sticker artworks, wheat-pasting artworks, video projections, art interventions, guerrilla artworks, and street installations. A general characteristic of street artworks is to be unsanctioned. Without denying the contiguity between public art and street art, I believe that, by being unsanctioned (and, in all likelihood, unlawful), street artworks enter the public space in more intrusive, disturbing, and

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22 2002) <<http://www.exibart.com/notizia.asp?IDCategoria=205&IDNotizia=3748>>; and, L. Gelsomino and P. Orlandi, *Legge sedici. Note a margine. Architettura, arte pubblica, paesaggio* (Bologna: Compositori, 2005).

<sup>11</sup>Knight, *Public Art*, 17.

<sup>12</sup>C. G. Calo, “From Theory to Practice: Review of the Literature on Dialogic Art,” *Public Art Dialogue* 2 (2012), 65.

<sup>13</sup>It is impossible not to mention Banksy’s month-long residency in New York, which is taking place while I am reviewing this manuscript. As illegal works, some of Banksy’s pieces have been already removed or altered (“vandalized” seems not to properly apply to street artworks). See, for instance, D. McDermon, “Second Banksy Work Appears in New York After First Is Painted Over,” *The New York Times* (October 2, 2013).



violent ways than official public artworks. They thus acquire distinctive anti-establishment and anarchic “meanings” and functions that official public artworks generally lack.<sup>14</sup>

The choice to limit my discussion to artworks presented in the context of pluralistic democracies depends on important considerations. Such a choice does not have primarily to do with the empirical fact that new genre public art emerged within the political context of pluralistic democracy. It has to do with the possibilities that the interaction between public art and pluralistic democracy can unleash. First, the “inclusivist” tendencies that (should) characterize pluralistic democracies encourage the creation of a public art that not only reaches out to minorities, but also that gives them a voice “with the hopes of empowering . . . marginalized peoples.”<sup>15</sup> In other political contexts, public art does not appear as too preoccupied with those groups of people, and often functions as a tool used by elites to transmit their values.<sup>16</sup> Second, the tolerance that distinctively marks the public life of pluralistic democracies transforms the reception of public art into a site for contestation, where citizens can freely express their dissent, while challenging others’ views and the status quo. In other words, pluralistic democracies’ embedded tolerance releases public art’s capacity to facilitate dialogue and discussions among diverse groups and individuals, and liberates its contesting possibilities.<sup>17</sup> Of course, less tolerant

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<sup>14</sup>In a recent unpublished paper entitled “Bridging the Islands of Consciousness: On Street Art’s potential to Affect our Perception of Public Space” and presented at the IVSA 2013 Annual Conference on July 8 2013, Peter Bengtsen argues for a similar thesis.

<sup>15</sup>Knight, *Public Art*, 93. Knight also adds that thanks to the public art programs of the 1960s “for the first time all citizens, regardless of their educational background, socio-economic class, or geographical region, were entitled to have art in their daily lives.” See Knight, *Public Art*, 16.

<sup>16</sup>Kirk Savage investigates thoroughly how the elite used public sculptures to reaffirm their values and privileges during the Reconstruction in 19<sup>th</sup> century US. See K. Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). Rodney Fitzsimons considers a similar issue in the context of Late Bronze Age Mycenae. See R. D. Fitzsimons, *Monuments of Power and the Power of Monuments: The Evolution of Elite Architectural Styles at Bronze Age Mycenae* (PhD Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2006).

<sup>17</sup>For instance, Patricia Phillips describes public art as providing a “space of dissent.” See P. Phillips, “Temporality and Public Art,” in H. Senie and S. Webster (eds.), *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 298.

forms of governments tend to restrain significantly these prospects of public art in ways that require special attention.

This work examines a series of public art projects with a focus on Italian and American artworks. It was clear from the beginning that the contrast between those two artistic scenes would have provided additional originality and depth to this project. In effect, this dissertation introduces within the English-speaking discussion of public art some notable examples created in Italy, and offers the first systematic discussion of public art that takes into consideration such examples. Moreover, the striking differences in terms of historical heritage and patrimony between Italy and the US allowed me to address complications that might be easily overlooked when focusing only on one of those two artistic scenes. By bringing examples from heterogeneous contexts under the same umbrella, this dissertation then also provides a more comprehensive account of contemporary public art, which is taken since the beginning as a transnational and global artistic movement.

In order to gather a suitable amount of information for explaining the examples here examined, this dissertation examines an array of commentaries that appeared in notable news and cultural sources such as newspapers, magazines, periodicals, web portals, and blogs. The consultation of those sources was made necessary by public art's fleeting nature, and by the general lack both of a systematized canon of its still-developing history and of publications focusing on its criticism. The informality of those sources, I believe, well suits the livelihood and worldliness of contemporary practices of public art.

Before offering a chapter by chapter breakdown, I need to address one other preliminary. Throughout this dissertation, I use the expression "non-public artworks" for indicating those artworks that do not fall under my characterization of public artworks. There are important reasons for using "non-public" rather than "private," which might appear to some readers as the most natural choice. If we have learned anything from Jürgen Habermas' account of the

public sphere, it is that public and private do not constitute a dichotomy. We cannot regard them as exactly opposing sides of human life. Private and public mingle and mix in complex ways, while penetrating one another. Moreover, it is not at all clear how exactly what I call as non-public artworks would be private in any straightforward sense of the term. Often, they are publicly owned, that is, they are properties of the state. Most of the time, they are also accessible to the general public.

Chapter 2 develops a general characterization of public art's publicness. In this sense, it provides the bedrock on which the more general account of public art that this dissertation develops rests. By drawing from a dominant trend in the studies of public art, this chapter rejects the view that the publicness of public art depends on its being placed outdoor or on its being publicly funded.<sup>18</sup> As Hilde Hein effectively puts it, "The sheer presence of art out-of-doors or in a bus terminal or a hotel reception area does not automatically make that art public – no more than placing a tiger in a barnyard would make it a domestic animal."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, there are clear examples of public art—most notably Christo and Jeane-Claude's projects such as *Running Fence* (1972-1976), *The Umbrellas* (1984-1991), and *The Gates* (1979-2005)—that have been privately funded.<sup>20</sup> I argue that what makes an artwork public is the context within which it is received: *public* artworks are received within a public sphere, that is, the *public-art sphere*, rather than within artworld institutions. I develop the first systematic defense of this claim, and I examine analytically how its peculiar context of reception affects our experience and discussion of public art.

Chapter 3 introduces a further qualification to the account of the public-art sphere as developed in Chapter 1. It discusses whether there is a single and

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<sup>18</sup>See J. Hunt and J. Vickery, "Public Art in the 21 st Century," in *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, <<http://www.oxfordartonline.com.libproxy.temple.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2093917>>.

<sup>19</sup>H. Hein, "What Is Public Art? Time, Place, and Meaning," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996), 4.

<sup>20</sup>One could find a detailed explanation of each project by visiting Christo and Jeane-Claude's website at <<http://christojeanneclaude.net/>>.

united public-art sphere and only one public of public art, which I call *public-art public*, or a multiplicity of those. I argue that public artworks are experienced by a multiplicity of public-art publics and are received within a multiplicity of public-art spheres. By discussing few significant examples, I examine different categories of public-art publics. Public-art publics can be distinguished in the following categories: local, national, international, temporary, and enduring public-art publics.

In Chapter 4, I offer a sustained account of the logic by means of which participants evaluate opinions expressed in discussions within public-art sphere, which I define as *public-art debates*. It also suggests a model for understanding legitimacy of decisions in those circumstances. The nature of the context of discussion within which public-art debates develop, that is, a public-art sphere, have important consequences for what pertains the appropriate logic that should be at play. First, such a logic must well accord with the inclusiveness and the pluralism typical of public-art spheres. Second, it needs to be able to “rescue” the experiences and the opinions of non-experts. That is, it must well accord with the following view: in principle, all members of public-art publics (both experts and non-experts) can intelligently participate in public-art debates and enrich those discussions. Third, such a logic must be pluralistic in nature, and capable of dealing with a possibility that characterizes our experiences of actual democracies: persisting disagreement rooted in differences in value commitment. I offer an original “architectonical” solution to the issue of legitimacy of decisions in public-art debates. I advocate in favor of the construction of “hybrid” forums of discussions. In those forums, members of the public authority interact directly with members of public-art publics, while looking for a compromise that can accommodate the diverging viewpoints.

Chapter 5 expands the discussion of the logic of evaluation in public-art spheres. I examine the role that emotions play in public-art debates. By drawing from recent scholarship in argumentation theory, I argue that appeals to

different emotions can function as premises of those arguments that are used to support opinions in public-art debates. In other words, whether expressed verbally or non-verbally, emotional reactions can be generally translated into sentences that under peculiar circumstances might function as evidence in favor of an argument's conclusion. I identify those circumstances where an emotional reaction functions as evidence in favor of a conclusion with those cases where an emotional reaction is warranted. In order to identify those cases, I develop what I define as the *Pragmatic Test of Emotional Warrant* (TEW). In discussing emotional reactions to public artworks, I suggest that warranted emotional reactions that are relevant to the appreciation of public artworks can be grounded in properties other than aesthetically and artistically relevant properties. I propose that warranted emotional reactions to public artworks can also be grounded in (relational) non-artistic properties that express relationship between a public artwork, the socio-historical context, and sensitivities of the members of the public-art public who will experience it.

Chapter 6 addresses an issue that emerges while discussing emotional warrant: the ontology of public artworks. Here, I defend an hypothesis about an aspect of the ontology of public artworks. I call that hypothesis the public-related hypothesis (PRH). PRH argues that the properties that a public artwork has cannot be restricted to those depending on (the complex interaction between) the artist's intention, what can be sensorily discerned in its forms, and what bears on its style and genre. Some of the *real* properties that a public artwork has are a function of some features of its context of reception, that is, features of the public-art sphere within which that artwork is discussed. When discussing PRH, I also suggest that changes in a public-art public's history may very well modify the features of a public artwork's context of reception. As a consequence of such changes, a public artwork may very well acquire new properties, thus introducing an ontological ambiguity in its identity. I defend this view against a pressing objection: the intentionalist objection.

Chapter 7 explains what I think to be the value of public art. It is a value, I suggest, that public art possesses in virtue of its “publicness,” that is, in virtue of the peculiar nature of its reception. If Chapter 2 is the ground-rock of the dissertation, I take Chapter 7 to be its capstone. In short, public art’s value is a function of its capacity to promote political participation and to encourage tolerance. Many empirical studies, such as the NEA 2006 survey *The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life*, bring evidence confirming a positive relationship between the appreciation of public art, political participation, and tolerance. By drawing on previous chapters, I explain how appreciating public art can have those outcomes. According to my view, one cannot appreciate a public artwork by *individually* contemplating some of its features or “meanings.” In order to appreciate a public artwork as a *public* artwork, a viewer must *socially* interact with others by engaging them in a dialogue in which they all discuss about publicly relevant issues that relate to the presentation of that public artwork. In other words, in order to appreciate a public artwork as such, a viewer must participate in what I call public-art debates, that is, dialogues in public-art spheres. Through the social interactions that link those participating in a public-art debate, an individual can acquire politically relevant information (e.g., information about the social and environmental issues afflicting the area where a viewer lives, and information about how to contribute in solving those issues). By acquiring that kind of information, she can cut the costs of participating politically. When political participation is less costly, an individual is more likely to become active. Moreover, by putting in contact different individuals thanks to the inclusive nature of public-art debates, public art creates heterogeneous social networks, and exposes appreciators to diversity. The experience of diversity makes people more open-minded, and is fundamental for developing more tolerant behavior.

As a whole, this dissertation responds with argument to those who are critical of public art: not only the philistines, but also those art lovers and pro-

professionals who dismiss public art as a failed artistic genre.<sup>21</sup> Of course, appreciating public art is not the only way to promote political participation or to encourage tolerance. Education, for instance, plays a fundamental role in those respects, too. However, by filling with “meaning” our daily interactions, public art can broaden significantly our possibilities to become more active and tolerant.

As some philosophers begin to see, perhaps not so clearly yet, public art can effectively be a means for reinventing contemporary forms of communal life, which has been eroded in our increasingly fragmented societies.<sup>22</sup> In effect, what public art has to offer is an experience of sharing. The encounter with a public artwork can stimulate in an informal, playful, and participatory manner a sharing of (probably diverging) ideas about values and about our conception of the public good. Public artworks can help us “celebrate” our problematic diversity in the most proper way: discussing it in the hope to find a common ground.

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<sup>21</sup>As examples of public art’s detractors see, among others, J. Willett, “Back to the Dream City: The Current Interest in Public Art,” in P. Townsend (ed.), *Art Within Reach* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 11; and, A. Brighton, “Is Architecture or Art the Enemy?,” in N. de Ville and S. Foster (eds.), *Space Invaders* (Southampton: John Hansard Gallery, 1993), 43.

<sup>22</sup>I believe that both Arthur Danto and Gordon Graham consider this possibility. See A. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 187; G. Graham, *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Art versus Religion* (Oxford, UK and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 188 and ff.