



Dennis's compelling *Tourist Cabins* at 52nd and 53rd Streets, complete with interior lighting and a satellite dish, were dwarfed by the site. Amid the Park Avenue office towers, the smaller-than-life structures suggested giant doghouses as much as cabins. I mistook the grounded satellite dish for a puzzling sort of street lighting. Nevertheless, one passerby who looked as if he might need shelter himself seemed to get the point; he commented, "That's a \$100,000 mortgage, for sure."

George Rickey's *Two Open Rectangles*, located on a small traffic island adjacent to Union Square, was all but invisible against the surrounding traffic. David Hardy's *Field Display #2* at Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn also had problems with siting.⁷

Although it was installed along a much-used path, no one stopped to look at it while I was there. Here, the sculpture was the problem. The sign across the path identified only the artist, title, and sponsor, while the Web site described but did not explain the structure, which "looks more like a parks information site than a piece of art." "A claw-footed goblet" was displayed inside a glass box, while two blue galoshes filled with black sludge stood near the base. More puzzling than anything else, *Field Display* did not have enough visual presence to attract attention. Osman Akan's *The Third Bridge*, green

Top to bottom: David Hardy, *Field Display #2*, 2007. Mixed media, work installed at Cadman Plaza. Donna Dennis, *Tourist Cabins* on Park Avenue, 2007. Mixed media, work installed at Park Avenue Mall. Osman Akan, *The Third Bridge*, 2007. Fiber optic cable, Plexiglas, and metal halide lights, work installed in Brooklyn Bridge Park.

fiber optic reeds in Brooklyn Bridge Park, was all but invisible during the day. It looked as if it might be more effective at night, but I doubt that there was much of an evening audience at this remote site.⁸

Like most public art ventures, this one raised questions of how to evaluate success. One venue, the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning (JCAL), ended the gallery portion of "Jamaica Flux: Workspaces & Windows 2007" with a useful post-project discussion. On January 12, 2008, about a dozen artists joined the director of the Rufus King Manor Historic House (located in the eponymous park, one of the public art sites) for an informal conversation. Project director/curator Heng-Gil Han noted that JCAL had succeeded in realizing 18 installations in public places, six time-based performances, and one video projection and had been able to secure all of the sites requested by the artists, except one. Although many participants reported genuine community curiosity and interest, the need for more and better signage was acknowledged. This would have been useful for Lishan Chang's *Time*: the plastic wrap created a compelling visual experience but also prompted concern for the trees. The most obvious and heartening indication of success was that several hosts had asked that four temporary works remain until they deteriorated naturally.⁹

Deeply rooted in its immediate neighborhood, "Jamaica Fluxus" was very much a work-in-progress, with a view toward the past and the future. The history of public art was invoked by a re-creation of Gordon Matta-Clark's *Open House* (1972/2007) in the parking lot of the Citibank branch at 14th Street, off



Jamaica Avenue.¹⁰ The gallery exhibition included Felix González-Torres's *Untitled* (1991) posters, free for the taking, and a video of Robert Smithson's creation of *Spial Jetty*.¹¹ With the third iteration of "Fluxus" in 2009 in mind, Han distributed questionnaires for both the artists and the shopkeepers

who hosted projects. Realized on a much smaller scale within a circumscribed area, this indoor/outdoor exhibition nevertheless suggested ways in which the larger Department of Parks undertaking might be improved.

The Department of Parks outdoor exhibition did little to cel-

brate the past 40 years of public art in the parks. Since the indoor exhibition did that very well, it would have been much more productive and dynamic to have an open call for a curated city-wide exhibition of work by younger artists to suggest viable paths for the future of public art in our parks. It's not

Left: George Sánchez Calderón, *Plinth, Monument, Stoop*, 2007. Mixed media, work installed in Joyce Kilmer Park. Above: Lishan Chang, *Time*, 2007. Plastic wrap, work shown in "Jamaica Flux 2007".

too early to think about the 50th anniversary of this worthwhile enterprise.

Notes

¹ The exhibition included eight sculptures and was organized by Barbaralee Diamonstein, the first Special Assistant for Cultural Affairs, appointed by Parks Commissioner Thomas Hoving.

² The exhibition, curated by Sam Green, who had organized a similar show in Philadelphia earlier that year, was accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Irving Sandler.

³ Suzann Boettger, *Barbaralee: Art and the Landscape of the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 6-8.

⁴ Manhattan had the greatest number with 10 (exactly half); Brooklyn was next with 10; the Bronx had four; Queens and Staten Island each hosted three works.

⁵ It is interesting to note just how many organizations are now involved with public art. This exhibition cited the cooperation of or partnership with the Public Art Fund, Creative Time, CityArts, Place Matters, Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Lower East Side Community Preservation Projects, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Fort Tryon Park Trust, Hudson River Park Trust, Madison Square Park Conservancy, Wave Hill, Dumbo Art Center, Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Song Harbor Cultural Center, Alice Austen House, and several commercial galleries.

⁶ Inspired by a popular knock-knock often found on mannequins in the U.K., the sculpture is also intended as "an homage to and satire of British culture." Public Art Fund press release.

⁷ Sarah Lucas's *Perseval* at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, available at <info@publicartfund.org>.

⁸ Hardy's piece was funded by Forest City Ratner Companies.

⁹ Akan's sculpture was commissioned by the DUMBO Art Center's "Outer Space" series and was funded by the New York State Council on the Arts, Two Trees Management, and Con Edison.

¹⁰ The four remaining works are Gabriela Galvan's *Gathering The Dispersed*, installed on the premises of the First Presbyterian Church; Jon Cepson's *Bole*, a digital print banner on outdoor vinyl, installed on a building owned by the First Presbyterian Church; Sook Jis Ju's *Fusion Bee*, a living tree with soil, lumber, and a wooden bench, installed in a lot between JCAL and an empty building next door; and Steve Taylor's *Master Mesh*, a pattern painted on a street, at York College.

¹¹ The replication of the Matta-Clark piece was done on loan from MAMCO, Geneva, and with permission of the Gordon Matta-Clark Foundation. The replica was by Diego Medina. It was located near Jenny Polak's tree house sculpture, creating an interesting dialogue about potential living spaces, a tree-house type of structure which could also be entered.

¹² The loan of the endless copies was courtesy of the Walker Arts Center.