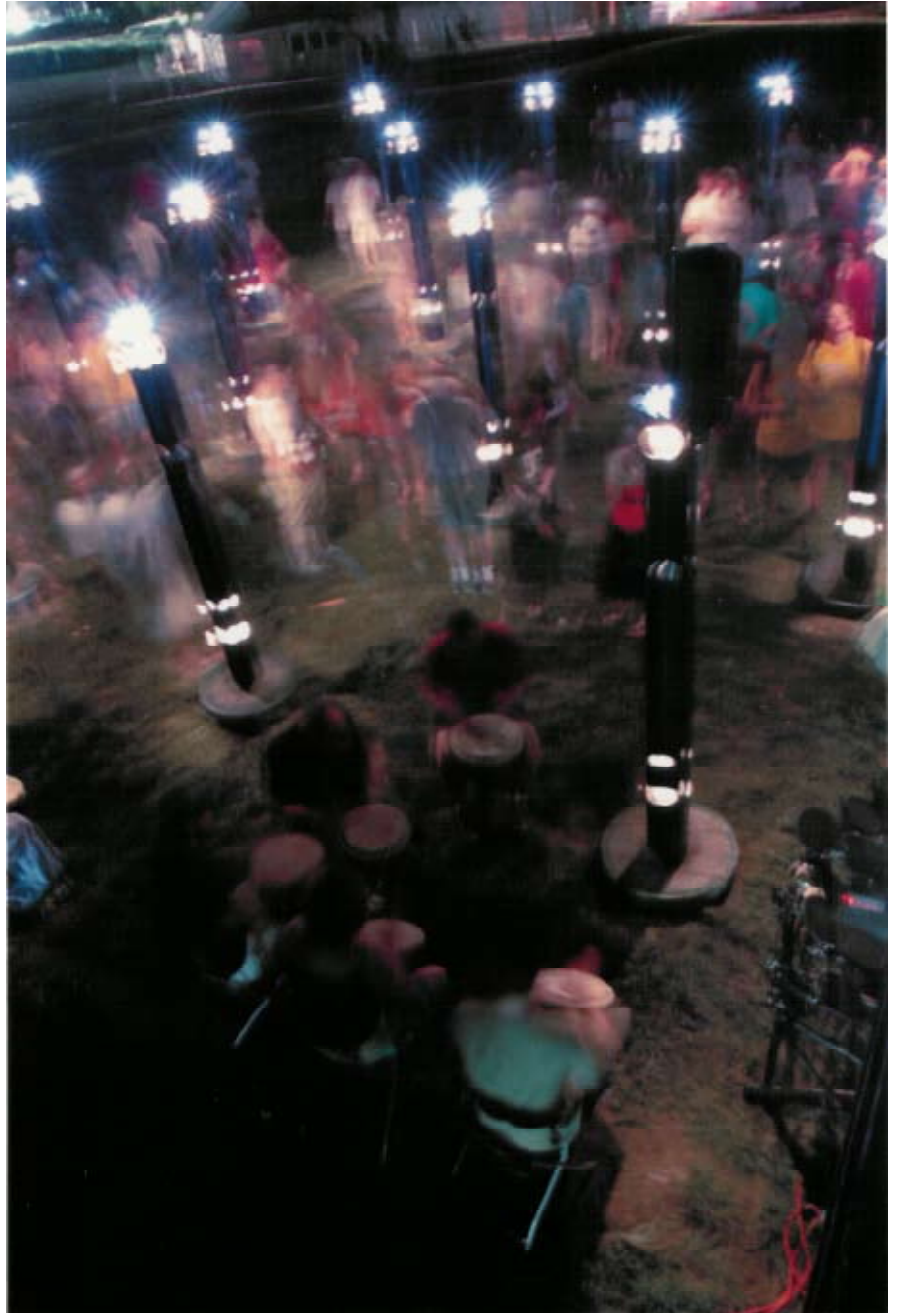


Public Space, Public Art



& Public Life

USC ANNEBERG

The Norman Lear
CENTER

An edited transcript of a panel discussion
October 12, 2009



THE NORMAN LEAR CENTER

The Norman Lear Center is a nonpartisan research and public policy center that studies the social, political, economic and cultural impact of entertainment on the world. The Lear Center translates its findings into action through testimony, journalism, strategic research and innovative public outreach campaigns. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, the Lear Center builds bridges between schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research; through its conferences, public events and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field.

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VISIONS AND VOICES

The USC Arts & Humanities Initiative

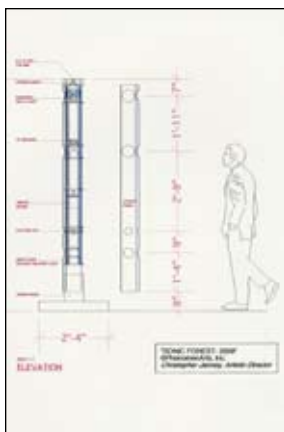
VISIONS AND VOICES

Visions and Voices is a university-wide arts and humanities initiative unparalleled in higher education. The initiative was established by Provost C. L. Max Nikias in order to fulfill the goals set forth in USC's strategic plan; to communicate USC's core values to students; and to affirm the human spirit. Highlighting USC's excellence in the arts and humanities, the initiative provides a unique, inspiring and provocative experience for all USC students, regardless of discipline, and challenges them to become world-class citizens who will eagerly make a positive impact throughout the world.

The series features theatrical productions, music and dance performances, conferences, lectures, film screenings and many other special events both on and off campus. At every Visions and Voices program, students are invited to dialogue and interact with artists, writers, professors and special guests. These interactions provide a dynamic experience of the arts and humanities and encourage active exploration of USC's core values, including freedom of inquiry and expression, team spirit, appreciation of diversity, commitment to serving one's community, entrepreneurial spirit, informed risk-taking, ethical conduct and the search for truth.

For more information, please visit:

www.usc.edu/dept/pubrel/visionsandvoices/



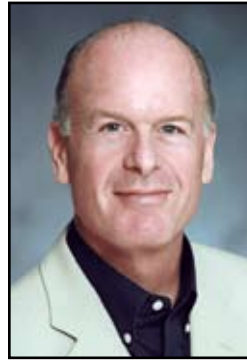
SONIC FOREST

Public Space, Public Art & Public Life was a panel discussion organized in conjunction with a special art installation at USC titled Sonic Forest. Created by Christopher Janney, Sonic Forest is a mesmerizing light and sound installation composed of sixteen eight-foot columns, each containing audio speakers, lights and photo-electric sensors that enable up to four people to interact with each column at once. Participants could immerse themselves in the multisensory installation as they pass between the electronic trees, "playing" the forest as they go by, triggering sensors by touch or movement, and creating an ever-changing score of melodic tones, environmental sounds and spoken or whispered texts, with varying effects of light. For the event, Janney composed a special piece that was performed by Stan Strickland on electronic flute together with the percussion section of the USC Trojan Marching Band. An image of Sonic Forest is featured on the cover page.

PARTICIPANTS



Anne Bray is an artist, teacher and founding director of Freewaves, a non-profit arts organization presenting a decentralized video and new media festival every two years at art venues in Los Angeles, on web, public TV, and video billboards. Video art streams from the organization's recent exhibitions can be found online at www.freewaves.org. Bray has exhibited her own artwork at gas stations, malls, movie theaters, on tv, in department stores, on billboards and art venues, combining personal and social positions via video, audio and 3D screens. As a teacher she covers new genres at Claremont Graduate University and public art at USC.



Robert Kraft is an American songwriter, film composer, recording artist and record producer and has been the chief executive of Fox Music Inc. since 1994, becoming president in 1998. He has produced such artists as Linda Ronstadt, Bette Midler, Celia Cruz, Tito Puente, Johnny Mathis and Ozzy Osbourne and his songs have been recorded by Roberta Flack, Joy Enriquez, Los Lobos, Dr. John and Kermit the Frog. Kraft supervises the music for all Fox Filmed Entertainment motion pictures. During his tenure at Fox, dozens of Fox scores and soundtracks have gone gold and platinum, including the soundtracks for *Titanic*, *Moulin Rouge!*, *Garden State*, *Walk the Line* and *Juno*. During his tenure, Fox Music has garnered ten Academy Award nominations, winning four Academy Awards, 14 Golden Globe nominations, 58 Emmy nominations with 11 wins, and 46 Grammy nominations including 12 Grammy Awards.



Scott S. Fisher is a media artist and interaction designer whose work focuses primarily on interactive environments and technologies of presence. Well known for his pioneering work in the field of virtual reality at NASA, Fisher's media industry experience also includes Atari, Paramount and his own companies Telepresence Research and Telepresence Media. A graduate of MIT's Architecture Machine Group (now Media Lab), he has taught at MIT, UCLA, UCSD, and is a project professor at Keio University in Japan. Fisher's work has been recognized internationally through numerous presentations, professional publications, and in the popular media. In addition, he has been an artist in residence at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies. His stereoscopic imagery and artwork have been exhibited in the U.S., Japan, and Europe.



Christopher Janney is an American installation artist and musician known for his work on the interrelation of architecture and sound and for creating "sound sculptures," interactive sound/art installations. Much of Janney's work has sought to create "permanent participatory soundworks for public spaces," including interactive sound and light installations for airports in Dallas, Boston, Miami and Sacramento. Janney grew up in Washington, D.C.. He received a B.A. degree (1973) from Princeton University (where he studied with Michael Graves and James Seawright). After graduation, he studied percussion and music at the Dalcroze School of Music and Mannes College of Music in New York, performed jazz and worked

PARTICIPANTS

with various artists and dance troops (including Merce Cunningham Dance). He received an MS (1978) from the newly created Masters program in Environmental Art at MIT. Since 1978, he has worked with his studio PhenomenArts, Inc. He is a visiting professor at the Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union, New York, NY, and teaches a course in “Sound as a Visual Medium.” He currently lives in Lexington, Massachusetts.



Lear Center founding director **Martin Kaplan**, a former associate dean of the USC Annenberg School, holds the Norman Lear Chair in Entertainment, Media and Society. A summa cum laude graduate of Harvard in molecular biology, a Marshall Scholar in English at Cambridge University, and a Stanford PhD in modern thought and literature, he was Vice President Walter Mondale’s chief speechwriter and deputy presidential campaign manager. He has been a Disney Studios vice president of motion picture production, a film and television writer and producer, a radio host, print columnist and blogger.



Qingyun Ma was named dean of the USC School of Architecture and holder of USC’s Della and Harry MacDonald Dean’s Chair in Architecture effective January 2007. After practicing architecture with Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates in New York City, Ma founded the Shanghai architectural firm MADA s.p.a.m. (for strategy, planning, architecture and media) in 1996, creating award-winning projects such as the Longyang Residential complex in Shanghai and the Silk Tower in Xian. Ma also coor-

inated Rem Koolhaas’s first Harvard Project on Cities, which yielded the 1993 book *The Great Leap Forward*. The two collaborated on the Central China TV headquarters in Beijing and the Stock Exchange Building in Shenzhen as well. Ma’s other buildings include Qingpu Community Island in Shanghai, Centennial TV and Radio Center in Xian and Tianyi City Plaza in Ningpo. His work has been exhibited around the world, and his honors include a Design Vanguard award from *Architectural Record*, Phaidon’s Emerging Design Talents designation and a New Trends of Architecture designation by the Euro-Asia Foundation.



Ted Tanner guided the real estate acquisition, master planning, entitlement and development strategy for L.A. LIVE, the 40-acre, nearly 6 million square foot sports & entertainment district adjacent to STAPLES Center. With over 30 years of real estate development, architecture and urban design experience, Tanner has created the master plan that incorporates a 54-story, 1001-room convention “headquarters” destination, three clubs, 12 restaurants, the Grammy Museum, and additional residential units, entertainment, hospitality, and office space, parking and an outdoor plaza into this dynamic mixed use urban district. Tanner also oversees AEG’s public and governmental affairs division and has played a role in the company’s union negotiations as well as community/business outreach.

The panel discussion can be viewed in its entirety online at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xh-cU8R3Uaw

Public Space, Public Art & Public Life

Martin Kaplan: The Norman Lear Center is thrilled to be co-sponsors of tonight's Visions and Voices project. An event like this doesn't happen unless a lot of people do a lot of work and I want to start by acknowledging the incredible amount of work done by my partners in this Visions and Voices effort. Scott Fisher and Patrick Morganelli. [Applause]. Scott's at the Cinematic Arts School and Patrick is a Thornton man. Please join me in thanking them for their work.

Did any of you get to see Sonic Forest tonight or during the day? Excellent. So there's some familiarity with the work. This evening, you're going to hear from the creator of Sonic Forest. Then we're going to look at it from lots of different angles, including the broader context of what Sonic Forest is an example of, talking about public space, public art and public life.

Then we're going to hear from you and I hope that you're going to be riled up enough to want to engage with the panelists.

The topic is how public art can activate public space and make it a social space, a space for public life. Having said that, you might ask why does public space need to be activated anyway? And what is public art? And if you know what public art is, what is art? What about public life – are we all on stage? Is life just reality TV minus the cameras? And if we're all performers, who's the audience? That's the terrain we'll be covering tonight.

We begin by having the creator of Sonic Forest start us off. He is an internationally acclaimed artist. His work has appeared throughout the United States and Europe. He was trained as an architect and a jazz musician. He makes architecture more like



Sonic Forest by Christopher Janney

music and he makes music more like architecture.

He was trained at Princeton and MIT and nevertheless, has the family good sense to have a son who is an undergraduate here at USC. Please welcome my friend and the creator of Sonic Forest, Christopher Janney. [Applause].

Christopher Janney: I get to talk a little bit about Sonic Forest and projects like Sonic Forest in relation to this bigger subject – public space, public art, public life. When we started talking about this, which could have even been as early as a year ago, I sent a note to Marty. It was about the idea that architects and landscape architects really have a responsibility to design at the macro scale. They don't often get down to the level of community, or then to the level of the single pedestrian.



I am of the mind that this is an important thing. Spaces should be made for people and for individual people to interact with each other. The work that I do and the work that I explore uses contemporary technology to make these kinds of public spaces a social foil – a way for total strangers to possibly interact with one another, if only for a minute. That also shapes the quality and the character of that space.

“ [Architects] don't often get down to the level of community, or then to the level of the single pedestrian.

–Christopher Janney”

I talk often about the micro scale and the macro scale. It's an awesome task for any designer to have to think of two different scales simultaneously. To get it all the way down to the individual is not often possible.

I want to start by talking about public space, and what I thought about when I was thinking about projects like Sonic Forest. Originally, Sonic Forest was a commission from the National Endowment for the Arts to create something that would plug into existing plazas – large plazas – and bring human scale back to them. I thought that certainly, in primitive cultures, like in villages, this scale issue wasn't a problem. The village was small enough such that the



center of the village tended often to be public space where people would gather for political issues, discussions, interaction. We lost a lot of that as our cities have gotten big and out of scale.

Certainly, the things that went on in these public spaces – performances and rituals – helped bring life to the village, to the community. These things also are lacking – or can be – when we start to make cities so big or we start to make plazas so big. Then we lose that sense.

If we move farther ahead in time to the Greeks in the fifth century, you can still find – in Athens, for instance – the open space in the middle surrounded by buildings. It was there to promote not only the economic conditions, but also the democratic and the political conditions. All this was a necessary part of making the social fabric that works at a city scale.



Clock Square, Prague

We get into the medieval period and it gets pretty dense, pretty crowded, but you can see there's still public space carved out. In particular, this piece right here [shows slide], which is an astronomical clock that is in the City of Prague. It's been running since the fifth century B.C. It hasn't been running maintenance-free, but there's actually a person that lives in the clock tower and his responsibility is to make sure the clock works. In this sense, it's like a performance piece. This clock does perform on the hour – in the middle of this plaza. It brings people together at a certain period of the day to observe this ritual and then they go about their business. The way that the clock focuses the city's energy and the direction on this large plaza was an interesting convergence in my mind of public space and public art. Then we have Rome [shows slide]. I wanted to show these images because here in Rome is where we begin to deal with some very large-scale spaces. They're quite obviously beautiful

spaces and I've actually done projects on the Spanish Steps in Rome. But when you're not having a big city event or a big religious event, as they do at St. Peter's, the plaza can often feel out of scale.

Now [shows slide], this picture was very important to me in my own work. It involves what happened in Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution there in 1917. It was the idea of artists taking over and bringing art into the street, art into life. It began the development of what is now called "agitprop," or agitation propaganda. Art played a very important role in the street and in changing the street culture. This played an important part in my thinking about my work, which is obviously not as overtly political. But it was the idea of putting art in the street in the middle of your everyday life, so that you have some aesthetic experience on your way to work. It's not like going to a theater or a museum to have a specific experience. It happens as part of your daily life.



Boston City Hall Plaza

Aha! [shows slide of pictures of Boston City Hall Plaza] Now we come to the modernist condition, which was really the incentive for me to create a project like Sonic Forest. I come from Boston, Massachusetts, so this is a condition that I'm quite aware of. Here is a picture from the year the Red Sox won the pennant. It's not this year; we know that. It's really great when you have a place to gather 10,000 people. But on the other 364 days, what do you have? You have a very bleak, over-scaled plaza. Sonic Forest was an idea: to make something, even a temporary installation, that can be installed and pulled out for the times when the public plaza is not being used for 10,000 people. It creates a different scale and a different quality.



Here's a photo of another modernist plaza [slide of Dallas Plaza] to give you an example of how the early modernist architects got the idea. They needed to have a plaza around their beautiful buildings, so they could keep other buildings away. And while they were at it, let's

have a sculpture of some sort to put on this plaza, though not always at the choice of the public.



Nevertheless, we need large spaces to have large public events – whether they're events hosted by the city, or whether it's the people themselves who rise up and they say "11,000 of us want to dance to *Thriller* in Mexico City. Give us a space to do it." There are reasons to have large spaces, but the question in my mind is: Is there a way that those spaces can also be flexible and be able to expand and contract?



Times Square, New York City

Here is a great example [shows slide]. Times Square is one of the great public spaces in the world. It's certainly a space that has for so long wanted to be more public. A fascinating thing has happened in the last two or three months. They closed the street and have turned it into a pedestrian park. Today you see all these nice people sitting in green chairs. You now can go and sit in Times Square and just enjoy it at the pedestrian scale. Even the Naked Cowboy is still there entertaining. Even in a condition like this, there's room to make public art. There is a program in New York where artists are able to interface with the commercial media that's there and make artwork that is in the middle of this pretty intense public space.

Here is another public space that I'm impressed with and that this is a good example of how public spaces can work [shows slide]. Millennium Park in Chicago. Not only is there the concert hall there on the upper left, but there is the very interesting water fountain and Anish Kapoor's piece and other artworks.

And that brings us to Los Angeles and, certainly, there's some really interesting projects that have been developed here. Nokia Plaza is one good example of dealing both with the macro and the micro. It's an interesting solution that I hope we'll

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—Christopher Janney

talk about tonight. The Grand Intervention proposal, which we'll talk more about I'm sure, is another great idea. It's a public space where, literally, the public pushed their way in, if I may say, and said "We want to have a voice." It was certainly with the help of some very important people, but it really was a way to help the public become a part of the design process.

I can't talk about public space in this millennium without talking about the digital world. We have people with us tonight who will speak to that and who are quite expert at it. But it's quite clear that with the advent of the information revolution, the whole notion of public space/private space is completely eroded. In the digital world, you have people wearing iPods in the middle of a subway train. They're in a public space but clearly in their own private world. You have video-gaming where people are playing games with other people from all over the world.

Related to the idea of McLuhan's global village, I pose this question to the group: If there's a global village, where's the global public space? Playing the video games has maybe gone too far, but I'm not of that generation, so I can't really speak to that.

The other side of the media revolution is about the virtual public space. Again, we have people on the panel who can talk more about this. But it's not about physical space anymore, it's about virtual space. Is there a virtual public space that is taking the place of our traditional public spaces?

I predict that in the future, Mr. Dick Wolf will design a single public space in the virtual world for every possible criminal event. He's doing it already, but it will be titled "Public Square"





and it stars this man [shows slide of Rush Limbaugh]. Thank you very much.
Onward.

[Applause]

Martin Kaplan: I'd like at this point to invite the panelists to come on the stage and I will introduce them.

You've met Chris Janney. Robert Kraft is a songwriter, film music composer, recording artist, record producer, and in those capacities, he and the projects he's worked on have been nominated for an Academy Award as well as Grammy Awards and Golden Globe Awards. To name a few examples, he has worked on the soundtracks of *The Little Mermaid*, *Titanic*, *Juno* and *The Muppets Christmas Carol*. For the last 15 years, he has been chief executive and then president of Fox Music. It's an enormous enterprise and he sits at the top of it.

Sitting next to him is Anne Bray. She is an artist, a teacher and the founding director of something – that if you don't know, you should know about – called Freewaves. Freewaves is a decentralized video and new media festival in Los Angeles. She's exhibited her own art. Just to give you a sense of what it means to be decentralized, she's exhibited her own art at gas stations and malls, movie theaters, on television, in department stores, on billboards and at art venues. She teaches public art here at USC.

Ted Tanner is an architect who is also an urban designer and an executive at AEG Real Estate Development, which is the entity that created LA Live and the



Nokia Plaza, Los Angeles

Nokia Plaza adjacent to the Staple Center. Have you all been there? Ted did the master plan and then got it all made and it's still being made. It includes three clubs, 12 restaurants, the Grammy Museum – which more people should go see – a theater and convention destination.



Dean Qingyun Ma is the dean of the USC School of Architecture. He is an architect who has had his work exhibited all over the world and has worked around the world. He founded a Shanghai firm called MADA s.p.a.m. It's not the spam you're thinking about. S.p.a.m. stands for strategy, planning, architecture and media – an interesting combination. His works include the Longyang Residential Complex in Shanghai and the Silk Tower in Xian. And USC is extremely fortunate to have someone as distinguished as he is as the dean of the School of Architecture.

I'd like to start the conversation talking about boundaries and whether they exist anymore.

-Martin Kaplan

Next to him is another colleague at USC. Scott Fisher is a media artist and interaction designer. He creates and studies interactive environments and the technologies of presence. Presence is something we'll be talking about as well as the idea of interactivity. He has worked with NASA, Atari and Paramount. He has his own company called TelePresence. He is a professor at the School of Cinematic Arts and chair of the school's Interactive Media Division. Please welcome this panel. [Applause].

On one of your slides, Chris, you had the word "boundaries" and talked about the ways in which boundaries are blurring. I'd like to start the conversation talking about boundaries and whether they exist anymore. What are the reasons these boundaries are changing?

I have a question for each of you. I'm going to ask these questions of each of you, and then at a certain point, you're going to lose patience listening to each other and you're going to want to jump in. I'll keep asking more questions and a free-flowing conversation will ensue and then you will guarantee its liveliness by joining in.



I'll start by asking Dean Ma a question about boundaries. I was reading some of the material that you've written, and what's been written about you. It described how you worked on architecture within the stream of mass communication. We think of mass communication as one thing, architecture as another thing. What does that mean?

Qingyun Ma: Architecture ends with a physical object. That's what we as architects deliver to society. But its role in society is much more than the physical object. It actually has messages, intentions, desires – both from the perspective of the community of architects and from the community of users or spectators.

Particularly in our office, we always begin our work through media operation. Before the structure is formulated in any physical way, it's already expressed to the public. We rely on a tremendous amount of media participation, both in the political realm and also in the commercial realm.

Critiques of architecture would criticize our works as being not purely academic or rigorous. But for us, this is the only way that architecture could actually serve a better role in this society. Architects these days are probably the most frustrated and miserable professionals on the street.

Martin Kaplan: Journalists might think they compete with that. [Laughter]

Qingyun Ma: Ah, yes. The reason it became this way was because people didn't realize architecture has a large role in participating in the non-physical context of society.

Martin Kaplan: A "performative environment" is another phrase that I keep

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[Architecture] actually has messages, intentions, desires – both from the perspective of the community of architects and from the community of users or spectators. .

–Qingyun Ma

hearing. In what sense is architecture in a performative environment?

Qingyun Ma: Architecture is informative to start with, but it has to get feedback from the context that's physical or social. That process is very important. Being a physical business or enterprise, architecture hasn't got there yet. But the performative environment is a goal that architecture, as a discipline, is addressing, understanding and, hopefully, creating.

Martin Kaplan: So not just in the design process, but once the thing is built, it remains in a participatory, performative environment?

Qingyun Ma: Precisely so, precisely.



Martin Kaplan: Chris, did you want to get in on it?

Christopher Janney: The performative environment – does it have a physical form, or is this part of the process that leads you to the physical manifestation?

Qingyun Ma: It starts with the physical context because it has a lot to do with what we understand as environment. The trend today is to reduce the environment into measurable bits and measurable agents. But that's where the whole debate has started. In the end, it's a social performance that architecture plays.

Martin Kaplan: So the boundary we've been talking about is a thing and a process. A thing is also a process and electrons are waves and particles.

Scott, I want to ask you about a different boundary and boundary crossing. It's virtual reality, hyper-reality, surreality. What is the distinction, if any, between the world we live in and the world that we experience through technology? Has it all come together?



Scott Fisher: Please don't call it virtual reality. We approach the question by looking at this layer of virtuality of information – of data that's been accreting around our physical environment, around ourselves, around just about everything we do. What we do is visualize that, give people some way to both enter into it, to interact with it, to use it in ways that hasn't really been possible until just recently.

I've been interested in this idea of presence and particularly the idea of "telepresence." How do you mediate that experience?

Martin Kaplan: What is "presence," for people who are not familiar with it?

Scott Fisher: Simply, it's a sense of being in a particular place.

Martin Kaplan: Whether or not you're there?

Scott Fisher: Even if you're there. I would argue that in our current environment, you often don't have a strong sense of presence. There's a wide spectrum of being present and very aware of what's going on. But then withdrawing into other virtual spaces, as you brought up.

What we've been trying to do is figure out how you mediate that. How do you augment presence with technology? Chris has taken an interesting approach to this in his installation. So often, when I talk about the virtual environment, people think that this technology comes between us and the natural world. I argue that it's actually a very good way to increase your environmental awareness. It's a way to give you a better sense of context.

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...people think that technology comes between us and the natural world. I argue that it's a very good way to increase your environmental awareness.

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-Scott Fisher

It's like carrying a field guide. I don't know if any of you are hikers or interested in being out in a natural space. Often you have a guide to help you understand what's around you. What we've been trying to do is figure out ways to do that with what we call "augmented reality" or "mixed reality" – superimposing graphics onto that physical space.



Back to this idea of telepresence and tele-existence. It's confusing, but it seems that technology and augmentation can help better visualize and make you feel more connected with the world around you.

Martin Kaplan: With the non-technological world around you?

Scott Fisher: Yes. I again would argue that what Chris is doing is also helping us pay attention to natural sounds around us and I thought the cage quote that he opened with tonight was especially appropriate.

Martin Kaplan: So that's another boundary, the world as experienced with and without the mediation of technology. Robbie, we were talking the other day about Marcel Duchamp, a French artist in 1917. He took a urinal and he called it a fountain and sent it to an exhibition and created something of a firestorm. That's of interest to you. The question I'd like to ask is what's the difference between art and not art? Humor me.

Robert Kraft: Does anybody know what he signed on the urinal? He signed the urinal "R. Mutt." It's an alias. In the last 100 years, I'm not sure anyone has asked the question any better, which is why wouldn't that be a legitimate entry into a museum or an artistic exhibition? Shortly thereafter, he put a snow-shovel in a museum and called it "In Advance of a Broken Arm."

But the art simply asks the question that may be pertinent to this discussion. Is there some



La Fontaine by Marcel Duchamp



need to define what we call art? When you go into the men's room and you look at a urinal, is that an exhibition of fabulous artwork or is it just a men's room?

Martin Kaplan: Is there actually a set of hypotheses or possible answers to that question or is it only the endless questioning? Duchamp asks the question: What is art? Who is to say what is art?

All art then, in some ways, becomes about the question of what is art?

Robert Kraft: You're actually poking into an area that's very good for this group.

Martin Kaplan: I hope so.

Robert Kraft: Is there a theoretical and cerebral thing that we all have to do to define something as art? Do you have to think about it and define it and go into a fancy, intellectual debate? If you're walking on a street and you see this cool thing, do you have to distinguish it as art? Is it just an experience, a minute of joy and difference? Do we have to start writing books about it to make sure that we know whether it is art or not?

That was always the great joy I found in Duchamp. He didn't say "Let me write a lot about this and think about it and define it." He just made one gesture that answered everything, which said: "I don't know; it's funky and funny and subversive, but you decide." As a musician, I've always been very allergic to overthinking. Isn't it all about feeling in some ways too, an emotional response? So I like to not overthink it.

If you're walking on a street and you see this cool thing, do you have to distinguish it as art?

-Robert Kraft



Christopher Janney: I want to speak for a moment about the urinal because you have to know that he turned the urinal upside down.

Martin Kaplan: Correct.

Christopher Janney: And in doing so, he basically contradicted the utility of the urinal. It could no longer be a urinal. He stuck a bicycle wheel in a stool, so it could no longer be a bicycle wheel and it could no longer be a stool. He gave a new idea to this previously understood utility. So it isn't that he just picked the urinal. There was a whole subversive side to this story. It isn't that he just picked a urinal and said, "Here it is." He did something to the object that rendered it no longer the utility that it could be and, therefore, elevated it to another plane.

This is how he talks about his ready-mades and this is very much why he is considered to be the father of conceptual art. It's not about the making of the object; it's about the perception of what you might do to the object to shift your idea of what that object is. Your reference to Sonic Forest is correct because it is about feeling. There was a lot of thought that went into it, but it's not about thinking. Those who want to think about it are free to. But it's there for those who want to just experience it. It reminds me of a story about Charlie Parker when a student asked him, "Should I go to music school so I can become a great musician?" He said "Yes, you should go to music school, learn everything you know and then forget that shit and play," and he meant it. At a certain point, you've got to.

Martin Kaplan: That's not true of architecture school. [Laughter].

Christopher Janney: But it actually is, okay? Bring in the kid, but at some point you have



to let him go and be who he is. That's part of understanding and thinking about aesthetic experiences. It's still got to come from this place of the unknown, of the soul.

Martin Kaplan: And you, Anne. Both in Freewaves and personally, you place art in places where it's often not seen. I'm wondering what that does to the traditional boundaries between the artist, the curator, the critic and the audience. We have those boxes. We think we know what that means, but when you put stuff in shopping malls and on billboards, those boxes get contested, don't they?

Anne Bray: I just did one on Hollywood Boulevard last year and it was really a struggle to put it there. We put video installations in about 50 stores up and down the boulevard that it took me two entire summers going door-to-door to convince them. I told all the artists that's where we were showing their video work and they all agreed. But I wouldn't say the artists were really thrilled to be showing at tattoo parlors and taco restaurants, etcetera.

The other is that the critics come in beforehand and they say, "Oh, this exciting thing is happening." But then they don't take it very seriously. They don't write an art review of it and then the audiences come by and are confused. I use that store or billboard, etc., as a frame to surround this very unfamiliar artwork or experimental video. By having the art in this familiar context that they see as they walk in the door, they understand the frame. It's trying to frame the art in normalcy, so that you can transition your way into wherever this art piece is.

We're trying to help the audience transition from being in the unknown to the known. But if you go into a museum and it's declared what you're about to see is art, you have this reverence and distance and alienation to it. When I'm talking to

We're trying to help the audience transition from being in the unknown to the known.

-Anne Bray

whoever, I don't call it art. "What is it?," they ask. And I say, "Oh, it's something to look at. It's something to play with." If I use any other word but "art," people dive right into it. But if I say that it's art, they're like "I gotta go now."

Martin Kaplan: Do people experience the unusual place that you put the art differently because the art – or rather not the art, the "plaything" – is there. Does that make the place different to them?

Anne Bray: We're back to the title of this event. What we're doing is creating public space. Otherwise, the viewer's only intention in this space, this generally commercial space, is when they have to pay for something. Like any new idea, it comes from a new perception of the world. And art helps create that new perception.

Martin Kaplan: You just gave me a cue to ask Ted a question about the contrasts and similarities between public space and commercial space. Are there distinctions? The place where Sonic Forest is, for example, is called Hahn Plaza. Hahn Plaza, Nokia Plaza. Is there a distinction or not?

Ted Tanner: You could clearly appreciate Nokia Plaza as a commercial space. We have always seen it as another venue, a gathering place that can be a multi-tasking vessel for people to interact – whether it's the community gathering to see President Obama's inauguration or – the funniest thing I saw two weekends ago – the end of a triathlon. There were at least 50 tables upon which people were getting very public massages after the marathon.

We've worked hard to make [Nokia Plaza] a more public place and not feel like a sponsored space.

-Ted Tanner

We've worked hard to make it a more public place and not feel like a sponsored space. We have helped pay for the improvements that make the space. We have activated it almost to the level of sensory bombardment – with media, with signage, with light. We feel that's



an important thing to do in Los Angeles, to create a center of light and energy, not only for people who are passing through to see a Laker game or a concert at Nokia Theater, but to actually have that be a venue, a place to come to.

We've had USC students display their animation film on our towers, and I'd love to do more of that. I'd love to hire Chris to do something that really transforms the space into a public art experience. It's a very flexible environment. We've worked hard to give it scale. We've also worked hard to set our buildings back a little bit further off of the streets. It's not just the plaza square. It's the street that crosses through it that we can close down. It's the edges around it, the paseos that lead into it. We've tried to make those small spaces into people places – with trees, dining and places to sit. It's still a work in progress. But I would love it to be much more of a public gathering place.

Martin Kaplan: Would you consider putting lawn chairs there?

Ted Tanner: Sure, absolutely.

Martin Kaplan: Our own Times Square?

Ted Tanner: Absolutely, yeah.

Christopher Janney: How about the Naked Cowboy?

Ted Tanner: I'm not so sure about that. [Laughter].

Martin Kaplan: Chris, you've been listening to this conversation and occasionally

jumping in. I'm going to invite you now to jump in with both feet. Is there some aspect of what you've heard that you want to highlight, agree with or disagree with? Or would you prefer a question from behind the door?



Christopher Janney: I'll take the door. [Laughter]

Martin Kaplan: Okay. In what I've read about your work, one of the themes is the idea that your art, your public art, enables strangers to play with each other, to have an intimacy as a consequence of being around that art. I have a question, and it's provoked in part by those pictures of Boston and of those immense plazas where people look like ants. What's your opinion on the modern condition? Are we all lonely strangers needing public art in order to connect with each other?



Reach by Christopher Janney

Christopher Janney: The concept of urban alienation is not a new concept. It's a term that I've always been interested in. I spoke about it earlier to some degree. There was a time when the community was small enough that people could relate to one another, even on the street. They knew one another – maybe not everyone, but the scale of the city allowed for social interaction to happen. Once cities got to a certain size, this became very difficult. There were too many people.

I've always tried to say that one of the things I do with my work is to chip away at urban alienation, to make structures that allow for people, even crowds of people, to interact with one another on a one-on-one. Sonic Forest is made up of 16 columns; but it's also 16 individual interactive places. It's an environment where one, two or 60 people can interact. I'm not saying that they're going to. But I think of it as a proactive structure that allows for this condition to possibly occur.

Another piece of mine is a permanent piece in the New York City subway called *Reach*. It is on a subway platform, and if you reach up and you wave your hand you basically break the



photoelectric sensor and it triggers sounds of natural environments. What makes that very interesting is that you're in a New York City subway and you're already slightly anxious. You're underground. New York is a pretty intense place. You're holding pretty tight to your purse or your wallet or whatever you have. So there's already an energy there that is pushing up against you. That piece would not work for me out in a forest.

So you have to think about the public condition, the condition of the public space, where it is, and try to also use that as part of the piece to create like a social foil.

Martin Kaplan: Scott, the new School of Cinematic Arts is technologically interesting and you were describing ways in which it has embedded in it aspects of storytelling.

Scott Fisher: We moved into a new building in January, and since then we've been working on trying to make this new building into a character, a character that can tell stories. To do that we've embedded thousands of rich media files into the structure of the building itself and you interact with the building using your mobile phone. There's an iPhone application that everybody in the building can use to develop a relationship with the building. So when I say "character," I don't mean something like Hal in *2001*.

We want people to become more aware of the life of the building and make the building more transparent. The building has a Twitter stream, so it's basically Twittering about the several thousand sensors that are in the foundation as well as all the environmental data that basically runs the building.

We've built some furniture that lives in the building that actually has documentation video footage of it being built, of the MGM Studios where the wood came from –



USC School of Cinematic Arts

originally where *The Wizard of Oz* was shot. The building basically sends this stuff out over Bluetooth so you can again pick up these images with your phone.



The building sends you on missions to take photographs of it, to learn about other parts of Los Angeles and other buildings. It's particularly interested in movies where buildings get blown up, which it doesn't really understand. [Laughter]. It is horrified by it. Anyway, I could go on and on. It's designed so that when you go into the building and use the iPhone app, the building will ask you to help it learn about certain films and so on.

For us, this is really about context and about, as I said, transparency. It's about having a better sense of your environment and having the building able to contribute to that. We know where all the activity is concentrated in the building and so on. So I think it's an interesting challenge to get people to play with the building and treat it like another entity.

“It's about having a better sense of your environment and having the building able to contribute to that.”

-Scott Fisher

I would tie it back to what Chris was saying about this large plaza in Boston. I lived a couple of blocks away from there for many years and I was horrified by that open space too for a while. But now, I see it as a tremendous opportunity to embed all kinds of virtual stuff and use this space to do virtual art installations. We did an installation in a public space in Japan where participants could submit images, poems, Haiku and anecdotes encapsulated in a wide, open space very much like that one in Boston. But couldn't see it when you went there until you used a headset that we built to make that invisible space visible to you.

Back to the idea of boundaries and context – there's a wonderful opportunity to populate that space with other kinds of information, not just physical architecture, but virtual architecture.

Qingyun Ma: A building itself must be public art to start with. It should not be only an enabler of public art. We architects look at a building as art itself.

There is a slight risk in public art that once you label it public art, there is a tendency to



reduce the quality level of that art so that the public feels an easy access to it. Immediately, you kill the quality of art. Art has to be kept in a particular realm that it is explored by the general public rather than being given to the public. What impresses me about Chris' work is that it remains highly sophisticated and highly entertaining simultaneously. There is this intense curiosity that's immediately built into it. That's the quality. It isn't just given as art to a public and told, "This is art; please take it." In this way, there are so many failures in public art projects.

Anne Bray: I was just thinking about the differences between advertising and art, in multimedia and virtual reality, in relation to the audience. We, as artists, have a degree of respect or disrespect or even assumptions about the audience. But I think it's changing. When Scott was talking about people emailing their art to his system, then there is this question about who is the art maker, the receiver, who is the critic and the curator? It's blurring lines.

Martin Kaplan: Robbie, when you work on the scores and soundtracks for movies, is there an artist doing the composition? Or is it instead a consequence of lots of different players with lots of different issues of intellectual property and how much something costs and whether the director agrees with the music supervisor? Where, in all that, is the art?

Robert Kraft: It's an interesting rebalancing act. Are *The Simpsons* public art? You have 20 million people watching it every Sunday night for free, or at least for the cost of a television set.

Martin Kaplan: Is *American Idol* public art?

Robert Kraft: It would be in the same category. If the medium is the message,

then it's just whatever is coming off YouTube.

Martin Kaplan: But the larger question is about the mediated entertainment experience.

Robert Kraft: Right. In other words, is *Juno* more artistic than *Big Momma's House 2*? You're going to the same space to watch them. They both take the same amount of time and different human beings get equal amounts of joy from either one. It's difficult to start shredding the differences between art and commercial art in a public space. Is it something pre-determined, or is it user generated?

I spent today with James Horner working on *Avatar*.

Martin Kaplan: A great composer.



Robert Kraft: Yes, a great composer, along with Jim Cameron and a 100-piece orchestra. My question is, are they considered artists? I'd say, yes, they are two significant technological, visual and compositional artists. On the other hand, their art is being paid for by an enormous media corporation that needs to satisfy a whole lot of demands and be commercially viable. It needs to return an enormous investment that was made specifically so these two men could be here.

But again, it's a rebalancing of the same equation. On the one hand, it's interesting that we see this public art on display on a university campus. Yet, there was a great deal of permits that were required. Maybe we don't see this as often with a painter in his studio, or a solo guitarist, but to create there's usually a committee somewhere and capitalist interests involved.



Hollywood and filmmaking and *American Idol* are the easy targets. But they're not a whole lot different than any media that's made because it takes resources to make it. It's the difference of, "Oh, Britney Spears sucked, but I really love this avant garde artist." Wait a minute. They're both on the same silver disc and Universal Records is probably behind both of them at some level. But the avant garde guy never sold out. I'm sorry. He's just a little more dissonant than this commercial shit over here. But still, they're both commercial products.

So it comes back to the idea of rebalancing the equation. And I'm the first to say that the commercial media universe is the far end of the spectrum of thinking about these issues, but they're not horribly different. They're just more blatant.

Martin Kaplan: Did you want to add something, Dean Ma?

Qingyun Ma: Back to the debate of public versus private, is there actually a boundary and why? I find the debate of public space a very strange one. A couple of years ago while I was in China, I found that in that society, there's no public and private distinction at all. So there's really no question of what public means because the public realm belongs to everybody. There is no ownership of space and property.

If any members of the audience have experience in China, Japan or Korea, you see older people doing ballroom dancing in public plazas; and you see kites flying in Tiananmen Square. There is no boundary between where public starts and private ends. There may still be commercial and capitalistic equations at work, or even a political or social agenda behind it.

Martin Kaplan: I was just in Rome and the Vatican and St. Peters Square wouldn't be there without a huge religious agenda, a huge ego and the narcissistic agenda of the builders. It wasn't built out of the goodness of someone's heart. It was built as various popes wanted to outdo the pope before and build a space that



Kite flying in Tiananmen Square

proved his ability and he wanted to get Michelangelo. It seems there's always an agenda with these human beings. I keep finding that out.

Christopher Janney: So Ted, who is the pope of Nokia Plaza? [Laughter].

Ted Tanner: Getting back to this public-private realm, certainly, when you buy a ticket, you're in the private realm. What we've tried to achieve there is the mixing and blurring of that public-private space, whether it's the terraces of Lucky Strike looking down on the people coming out of the parking garage, or it's the downtown workers sitting in the plaza for a lunchtime concert.

We think [Nokia Plaza] is a content campus for all Angelenos to share.

-Ted Tanner

Those are the ways that we engage with one another in space and, yes, it's fun to have the vibe of a Laker crowd or a Kings crowd today. We're winning for a change, but it's important to take these vessels, these places, and try to open them up more to public experience. That's on our agenda and we designed it with that in mind. It can expand or shrink to accommodate the larger or the smaller group of people.

Anne Bray: I wanted to ask a question. Do you feel like all of Los Angeles is your audience or are there certain sectors of Los Angeles that you're attracting?

Ted Tanner: It should be all of Los Angeles, but more so those who have paid for a ticketed event. And we have multiple-scale venues that host a variety of live performances. We think it is a content campus for all Angelenos to share. And I wonder about what more we could be doing with our local community of neighbors both to the south and to the west.

Whether it's hosting a graduation for the 10th Street Elementary School on the Laker floor at Staple Center and then doing something outside on the plaza to celebrate it. Those are the



ways we can tap into the community that surrounds us.

Scott Fisher: I want to ask Ted if he could describe the Nokia art installation piece where people could leave messages.

Ted Tanner: We are blessed in both our Los Angeles and London projects with really forward-thinking corporate sponsors. Nokia is one in particular, a Finland-based company that was looking to sell handheld devices. We gave them name recognition in three places – the Nokia Theater, the Nokia Plaza, and Club Nokia. And they paid dearly for that, thank you. [Laughter]

Martin Kaplan: And that's before product placement.

Ted Tanner: It actually included product placement. But at Club Nokia, for example, you can stand at a number of stations with your Nokia handheld device and record a moment you've experienced inside the club and stream it onto the club's permanent history. You can then come back in six months and download that experience and that of others, maybe from that same show. It really is an engagement far beyond what we could have done alone. It's Nokia bringing their own ideas about how to reach a public that demands those kinds of experiences and is willing to play a role in them. Without the public participation, it wouldn't work at all.

Martin Kaplan: A reporter for a USC publication was asking me about Sonic Forest and I was enthusing and telling her it's just great; it's a way of activating public space, etcetera. But I did not get the response that I expected. Her reaction instead was, "Well, does this mean that every place is going to be Las Vegas? Is everything a theme park?" Which leads me to the question for anybody. This is something that we look at at the Lear Center. Is everything entertainment or is there

even a relevant distinction between entertainment, art and the experience of modern life? Do those distinctions matter? Clearly, for someone who says in horror, “It’s going to be Las Vegas,” and is worrying about what’s happening to our culture. Anyone want to take any aspect of that? Anne?



Anne Bray: I’ll go back to this relationship with the audience. What is your relationship with that audience? Are you informing them? Are you asking them questions? Are you asking for their input? Each of these is a relationship and each of them is different and it’s implied in all of the work we’ve been talking about.

Martin Kaplan: So what’s the relationship with an audience in entertainment that might be different from, say, the art relationship?

Anne Bray: Entertainment is top-down. It’s telling you this is funny, this is good, or this is sad. A lot of art is instead asking, “What do you think this is?” It’s posing a question and it’s putting out some various elements – depending on the genre. But it’s asking, “What do you think about this?” And the person has to put together the connections and create the links.

Martin Kaplan: I read *Architecture of the Air*, a lovely volume which is available on Amazon and which is a catalogue of Chris’ work. Chris, you talk about being a participant and being an observer, being in a creative spell. Talk about that in terms of what it means to make art.

Christopher Janney: When I said that you cannot be both a participant and an observer, I was referring to the Heisenberg Principle in physics but applying it towards creative endeavors. For example, to be the musician, you’re really just feeling the music, you’re improvising, you’re not thinking about it. The musician is in the bubble, in the moment, just letting go – as opposed to the critic, who plays an important role. By all means, both roles

are important. But the critic can assess immediately as opposed to being in the moment when you look back at it, reflect and think about it later.



In my experience, if you try to reflect on it while you're trying to do it, it doesn't work. That's also part of the creative process. The issue here is about entertainment versus art. Marty, your definition of entertainment is that it can be anything. Within your definition, there are artistic possibilities in everything. But it's so broad that I'm not sure it works. I make the distinction between entertainment and art, but that's probably because of what I do in life.

I make the distinction between entertainment and art, but that's probably because of what I do in life.

-Christopher Janney

Something like a urinal upside-down on a sidewalk, I'd probably walk right by it, even if it said "R. Mudd." [Laughter]. Okay? But in 1917, under certain social, political and economic conditions, under the zeitgeist of what was happening at that time, that particular gesture captured a moment and a culture. This is what art can do and can be about. It is a reflection of that moment, but that moment happening at another time. Today, that urinal would just be a urinal, okay?

So I'm not sure that entertainment for me fulfills all those aspects of the social, the political and the cultural. Entertainment for me is – it's about 1 in the morning and I can't go to sleep, so I'm just going to watch this movie and hopefully I'll fall asleep.

Martin Kaplan: That's not entertainment, that's Ambien.

Christopher Janney: Yes. I'm just saying there are times when I just want the entertainment to come at me. I don't really want to think.

Martin Kaplan: For the record, my definition of entertainment is not "it's everything." Entertainment, I believe, is the capturing and holding of attention. That's the root meaning of entertainment. And yes, everybody who a Wall Street



The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

analyst would call “someone who works in entertainment” – whether it’s movies or television or music and so on – they are, first and foremost, trying to capture and hold attention. They use different techniques and they do it toward different ends, but they share that in common.

But if you go with me that far, I’d invite you to go with me just a little bit farther and ask you this. When Frank Gehry designed Bilbao, isn’t that a way of capturing attention and holding it – creating a spectacle in order to get the eyeballs of the world on it? Isn’t a professor in front of the room desperate for the attention of the room and sometimes does things which are not strictly academic, but which are done in order to hold onto that attention, to entertain? I would contend that the impact of living in an attention economy on every domain is sometimes good and sometimes bad.

I’ll use a terrible word – entertainment-ized. Look at the way in which journalism has been entertainment-ized; look at the way politics has become a branch of the entertainment business. These are not entirely good things. But people are looking at the business model for journalism and they are coming to grips with the fact that they need to create a business model where people want this stuff. It’s not just the “broccoli” journalism that’s good for democracy. They also have to, in some way, get people to be interested. So the challenge of journalism in that context is to make the important interesting, to make improvement and weighty civic and public things, things that can also capture the attention in an attention economy.

I saw a hand out here.

Unidentified Audience Member: You’ve defined entertainment quite well. Could you define what you think art is?





Martin Kaplan: People who want to get attention and use certain materials to do so. For example, so much of art that followed Duchamp – like Warhol – is all about asking the question: If you pay art attention to me, am I art? What if it's something in a gallery? Warhol puts a box of Brillo in a gallery. That act requires that certain attention must be paid to it. Does that mean that it's art or not? Art in the 20th century and beyond is about getting attention and asking what is it that makes something art?

When we think of religious art now, it's art in a museum. We've changed its category of attention. I would say it's the intention of getting attention that constitutes art and it could be high art and it could be low art. They're both about trying to hold onto people's focus.

And I realize that this definition is highly inadequate, so I would love you to tell me in what ways it doesn't hold up.

Unidentified Audience Member: It doesn't completely hold up.

Martin Kaplan: Thank you. [Laughter].

Unidentified Audience Member: But my question is, do you own any art?

Martin Kaplan: Yes, indeed.

Unidentified Audience Member: And what is the art that you own and why do you own it?

Martin Kaplan: I own it because it captures my attention. It interrogates my understanding of what art is. Some of my favorite art is collage, like Eduardo

“...it's the intention of getting attention that constitutes art and it could be high art and it could be low art.

–Martin Kaplan”

Paolozzi, my favorite British artist. He pulls pieces from popular culture and puts in the same pastiche – a picture of Arnold Schwarzenegger and the design of a factory gear. And he puts it all together and says, “What a world is it that produces all these different cultural products? How can you make sense of all these things all at once?” I love art that violently yokes together different kinds of things and requires of the audience to make a coherent sense of it.

Unidentified Audience Member: My question is more of a statement. When you were talking about LA Live, you asked how we can make it more public. One thing about it is that every single time I drive by there, I try to avoid it because it’s a bombardment of neatness. You said that you wanted to have more artists use the space, but I don’t think there is space because the lights and other media there are overpowering.

The only reason people come there is because they’re going to spend money. To make it more public, maybe you could include green spaces somewhere so people could come there for another reason. I wouldn’t go there because I don’t want to spend money there. So if there was a green space where people could come and talk and interact in another way. You can sit in front of a café, but they want you to come in and buy coffee. So there’s not really a space where you can just be without having to pay.

Martin Kaplan: A free space.

Unidentified Audience Member: Right, a free space.

Martin Kaplan: Ted, do you want to talk about that?

Ted Tanner: It is a contradiction of sorts. We’ve made this space and it is a sensory





bombardment, there's no doubt about that. That was quite intentional. We're trying to capture eyeballs and that's important to our sponsors. That's how we create the income stream that pays for the space. But I do think there are opportunities there and maybe it's that we need to engage our community of interest-holders better and bring them more into programming the space. Let's face it; it is about programming, whether it's a farmer's market or a community festival or having the Gay Men's Choir there. We've done all these things. We're setting up a holiday skating rink that will have community skating lessons and other events.

We try to make it more public. But it's also used as a place that is about the red carpets for an awards show or the stream of fans queuing up for a club. It's a great challenge, a great question, and it's something we, as a company, need to address.

Unidentified Audience Member: If I were to make art in this space, what would it be? What form would it take? The only thing I could think about is taking that gigantic screen at Figueroa and putting something up there that totally subverts everything that that whole place stands for basically. I don't mean to attack you personally.

Ted Tanner: It's okay; it's all right. [Laughter].

Unidentified Audience Member: The place is such a huge blemish on downtown and I hate that it exists. [Laughter]. Sorry.

Martin Kaplan: Don't hold back. [Laughter].

Christopher Janney: But you should make that collage; you should make that. Go out there and take a photograph and make that. What imagery could subvert that?

We're trying to capture eyeballs and that's important to our sponsors, that's how we create the income stream that pays for the space.

-Ted Tanner

Unidentified Audience Member: But I need it to be within that frame. You know what I mean? I can't just take a photograph and put it in a gallery.

Christopher Janney: No, no, I didn't say anything about putting it in a gallery. I said it's for you. It's for you to be able to work out your idea, your notion of what can you do to subvert and both express what you're talking about visually? That's a fantastic beginning. Try it; it might take you somewhere.

Robert Frank: Bring a urinal down there. [Laughter].

Unidentified Audience Member: I'm one of Professor Bray's students. My question is about Sonic Forest. Who is the intended audience and did you reach them? Were you successful?

I've heard the terms, "people," "public space" and "urban" thrown out there quite a bit, and I'd like to know how you define the term "urban" and maybe where do you live? Do you live in an urban space?

Christopher Janney: You asked me if I feel I reached an audience?

Unidentified Audience Member: Yes, did you have an intended audience and if you did, did you reach them?

Christopher Janney: No, I don't. Part of what Sonic Forest is about is about being free, open and accessible. It's an experiment every time I set it up. I've had it for 15 years. There's permanent installations. There's one in Zaragoza, Spain; there's one in Cincinnati, Ohio. It's a platform; it's a stage. I love to sit and watch what happens and that's what it is for me. I've created a structure that gives people the opportunity to interact in certain ways. But people on bicycles, people on skateboards – especially here at USC – I haven't seen a lot of that.



That's a whole new game for me. So I try to keep it very open.

Martin Kaplan: Anyone want to take a quick take on urban? What does that mean?



Qingyun Ma: I'll relate that question to the notion of commercial versus public space. In an urban context, a space has to be first commercial before it becomes public – that's actually the real vitality of a city. Take Los Angeles, for example. Los Angeles is actually not a commercial place. If you go through downtown, all the major towers, if you actually do measurements of them, no ground floor or lobby level has any commercial activities more than one-tenth of the overall length. There's a large security desk, a couple of chairs with public art. So it's not commercial to start with.

Then how can it be public because public congregates in different forms? The public congregates from commercial purposes. Each individual is actually the most public form. Take a building like Disney Hall. There's only three doors around the perimeter and that's the best public building in the city. Then you take the Colburn School, and there are no openings around the perimeter. So it's not a commercial city to start with. How can it be public?

Then contrast this with LA Live and what actually offended you – it's too commercial. So the first lesson for Los Angeles is to maximize its commercial space. Get rid of the lobbies and the noodle and coffee shops. Turn it into Hong Kong [Laughter]. Turn it into Rome. Only 10% of the downtown footprint is actually used for commercial purposes. That's why they're not public. So the sidewalks don't have any people and public art. So this is just a note for Los Angeles and Los Angeles should catch up to be commercial before it became public.

Unidentified Audience Member: I'm a multi-video technologist and I'm

In an urban context,
a space has to be first
commercial before it
becomes public.

-Qingyun Ma

working with Anne right now on a major public art project that's being constructed at LAX. There's been a lot of discussion about what is good art and I'd like to pose the idea that this discussion has been going on since the first cave painting. We've created people in our culture who are experts at art and criticize art and think a lot about art. We also have artists who spend their lives making art and often, the very best art is very personal art.

So my question is, do you think there are gaps between architects, engineers, public art administrators and curators to make more large-scale public art projects possible?

Martin Kaplan: Who's going to pick that up, anyone? No one is going to disagree that there are challenges. Does anyone want to talk about a challenge?

Anne Bray: We could talk about the LAX project. We have a string of people involved. An artist says "I don't want to do that." They tell me; I tell the administrator; the administrator tells the engineer who tells the architect. I don't know how the communication finally makes it to the architect. It's very complicated.



Audience Member: The conversation tonight is larger than focusing on the function of art in our society and how people interact with art. I'd like to ask the panel for their comments on art from a different perspective. What is esthetics and what makes esthetics? And what makes a particular piece of art beautiful or what makes it intuitively enjoyable?

Martin Kaplan: Who would like to take that on? Chris?

Christopher Janney: As I had said earlier, the social, political and cultural conditions when a work of art is created has a great deal of effect on its content and its context and, for me, whether it has a certain resonance. That is how I would answer your question about esthetics. There's not an absolute by any stretch. Andy Warhol's Brillo Box done wouldn't have any significance today, but at the time – and with its relationship to what was going

on in terms of the commercial world – is what gives it the significance that it has. It's a marker; it's a visual marker of a certain time in our culture about what was happening.



Unidentified Audience Member: My name is Scott and I'm a landscape designer. Different forms of public space have been mentioned today from shopping malls, to a place for public art, to an area outside of a city hall to a corporate plaza. There are very different issues of control in those areas. Who is invited to participate? Who can be removed for doing things that aren't against the law? I was wondering if anyone would like to talk about the different places where one can find public art. Are there's any significant differences in whether it happens in a truly public place or a semi-public place? And what are the different control issues?

Ted Tanner: Bringing public art to a place, whether it's a temporary installation – and I know Chris has brought some of his art pieces out to the Coachella festival – in that way, it's experienced by the greatest public you can imagine. When it comes down to the city, yes, we have all kinds of things we need to worry about, whether it's emergency access lanes or notions of what is public space, what is private space. Where does my demising line for that outdoor seating area end or begin?

But when it comes to art, it really has to do with how you envision that space in a more holistic way. Take our recent "Playing for Change" event. We used a video of a single song to tie together cities around the world. Those are things that we can do in that space.

Audience Member: I'm an independent conceptual artist and a collage artist. My question is in the spirit and context of virtual space, public space, and creative, participatory interaction. Is there any online space where a creative individual can share their project visions for public spaces in a way that might help move that vision, that concept, closer to reality. I'm thinking of people who are not ensconced

in the industry already.

Martin Kaplan: Great. Hold that thought. Your question?

Unidentified Audience Member: I have a question about the creative process and public space. Do you have the space dictate what your work is going to be or did you think of your art first and think that was a good place to put it?

Martin Kaplan: And you are?

Unidentified Audience Member: Chris mentioned the Bolshevik Revolution and how art was really pivotal in forming that movement. Are you saying in our society today, despite media and entertainment bombardment, that a modern public art revolution is possible?

Martin Kaplan: The first question was about an online space for independent artists and I'd like it to be part of the discussion about the ways in which boundaries are shrunk. Anybody have one to propose that they know of? Is it going to be your Facebook page, Chris? [Laughter].



Christopher Janney: No, not a website, but more about a local organization. There's Creative Time in New York. There are places that you can write to.

Martin Kaplan: So you're going to find out, after we break, what some of these places are. Chris, these last two questions were both for you.

Christopher Janney: Well, no, I've got to start with the last one first because my memory is shot.

Martin Kaplan: Public art and revolution.

Christopher Janney: The Bolshevik Revolution. My answer would be to go study Shepard Fairey and Banksy – two artists who worked in the public realm, who do big stencils and really, if you know about Shepard Fairey –



Martin Kaplan: Shepard Fairey is doing one of the next Visions and Voices here.

Christopher Janney: And the question about whether public space dictates my art. There's no one answer. There are plenty of ideas in my head and a commission comes along to do something in a certain space and I try to think about whether or not it would work in this space and how I might modify it. There's always an initial vision, but definitely the space has to have some effect in terms of the actual physical manifestation.

Harmonic Runway was a piece I did for the Miami Airport. It was a 200-foot long walkway that had 132 sheets of colored glass. The metaphor in my mind was like walking through a rainbow. That's an idea I've had since I was about six years old. I finally got a shot in 1995 when the airport had a competition.

Prior to this, the Monsanto Corporation was only making six colors of transparent glass. But then they developed a new process that created a line of 1,000 different colors. I went to them and said, "Hey, I've got a project that would really promote your new color line." So they actually gave me the glass. Then I had to wait for the technology to be developed in order to have this six-year-old vision come to life, and then I had 2001 take it away.

Martin Kaplan: For those here who came because they wanted their brains stimulated and for those who came because art and passion and feelings are the same, and for those who just wanted to be entertained, I hope you had as good a time as I did. Please thank the panel. [Applause]. Please join us upstairs.



Harmonic Runway by
Christopher Janney

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