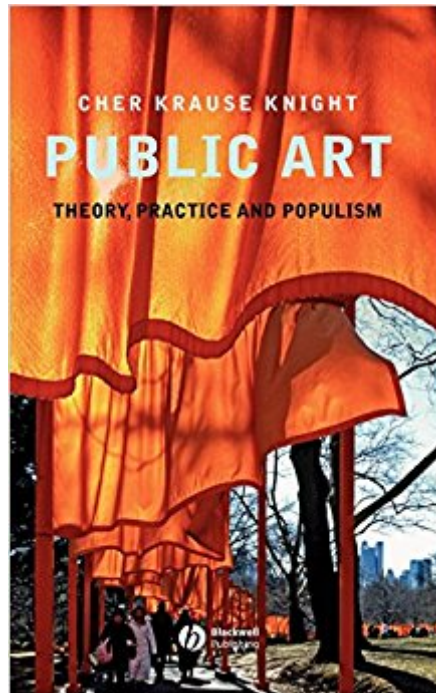




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Public Art: Theory, Practice, And Populism



Synopsis

This book takes a bold look at public art and its populist appeal, offering a more inclusive guide to America's creative tastes and shared culture. It examines the history of American public art â “ from FDR's New Deal to Christo's The Gates â “ and challenges preconceived notions of public art, expanding its definition to include a broader scope of works and concepts. Expands the definition of public art to include sites such as Boston's Big Dig, Las Vegas' Treasure Island, and Disney World Offers a refreshing alternative to the traditional rhetoric and criticism surrounding public art Includes insightful analysis of the museum and its role in relation to public art

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Customer Reviews

"Overall, Public Art is a provocative and impressive study of contemporary public art that is ambitious in its pursuit of populist virtues. ... Knight's book is an excellent example of art-historical scholarship." (The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, January 2010) "[Knight] offers a twenty-first-century definition of public art." (AfterImage, July 2009) "A broad account of public art in the United States, from its history and growth to its current meaning and purpose." (Sculpture Magazine, March 2009) "The thorough bibliography will greatly benefit public art professionals, artists, art historians, and laypersons. Providing a detailed, frank account of public art and viewer agency across the broadest spectrum, Public Art offers insight into works that might be beyond traditional conceptions. By bringing art that is often at the margins to the center, Knight offers fresh ideas on a subject ripe for further discussion. Recommended." (Choice, November 2008) "Cher Krause Knight â | focuses on the notion of populist involvement as the yardstick by which to

measure public art projects. She touches on well-known moments in the history of public art to illustrate the ways that the public has been variously excluded, humored, harangued, or genuinely integrated into projects. Most interesting are her musings on commercial sites, like Disney's Magic Kingdom and Las Vegas casinos. In their admittedly pandering capacity for spectacle, she argues, such places include the public in ways that snooty art commissions don't "whatever you say about their aesthetic values." (Public Art Review, Fall 2008)

"Cher Knight situates public art in a continuum of visual experience that includes museums, earthworks and Las Vegas. Embracing spectacle and popular engagement, she expands existing parameters to make public art both more provocative and more truly public." —Dr. Harriet F. Senie, author of *Contemporary Public Sculpture; The 'Tilted Arc' Controversy*; and co-editor of *Critical Issues in Public Art* "In this remarkable book, Cher Knight has done a splendid job of synthesizing current thinking on public art rightly concluding that in the modern world it is the public who awards value." —Dr. Sally Webster, Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art, Lehman College and the Graduate Center CUNY

I hate, hate, hate this book! Unless you are an art major, the book is close to impossible to read. The author included so much jargon! Loved everything she had to say (well, keep in mind, it's just her opinion) but the book feels like a museum - it's "public" but it's not inclusive. It makes the everyday person feel like the book is not written for him/her. Just like a museum. It's there, open for everybody but only the "elite" goes there. Everybody else feels out of place. This is what this book feels like. How ironic to write a book about public art and make the book feel like a museum! . Unless you have a degree in arts and are familiar with the jargon - this book will make you feel illiterate. The vocabulary... oh, the vocabulary...

This is a really great book if you want to generally learn about public art and the major issues that concern it. I bought this text for a class I am taking on public art, and it was a really helpful introduction into the topic.

This book is a required read for anyone interested in contemporary art, public art, aesthetics and/or the history of modern/contemporary art. It is very well written and highly readable and provides both insight and substance for both the novice and the expert alike. The approach taken by Knight is an insightful and significant one. This book gives an important reevaluation of public art as not just a

place/art of monuments and site based works but as a key and active aesthetic ground in which the varied interest (public/private), functions (monument/aesthetic statement), audiences (general population/art world), and cultural frames and references (popular culture/ fine art), make for aesthetic and cultural proving ground. One of my most important realizations from reading Krause's book is that rather than being a kind "no persons' land," which is neither important for the art world nor for the public, public art is one of the most important categories of art production today. And for this insight alone the book is well worth the price and I intend to use this book in several of my graduate level college studio art classes. I recommend it to one and all.

Knight provides a crucial study reevaluating the parameters and function of public art. In language that is accessible for a broad audience, she employs a methodological soundness and real insight. Knight, widely acknowledged for her studies on popular culture, situates art within the ubiquitous world of contemporary spectacle. Within the first pages, she introduces the complex framework that has risen around this subject. Rather than sidestep the slippery terrain that encompasses function, aesthetics, and reception, she advocates the critical involvement of the viewer as an essential component. In so doing, she navigates precarious territory by steering midcourse between the tastemakers and the cultural consumers. She qualifies with the following, "My populist perspective seeks balance between the hypercritical and uncritical nodes; to reorient our appreciation for artworks already absorbed into the canon, highlight the viewer's role, and suggest and expanded terrain for public art." Her study proceeds after a useful review of American public art to examine different responses and modes of interaction, from Christo to Scott Burton, from Lightning Field to Disneyworld. Throughout, she constructs an invaluable network of viewpoints from the most significant theorists and critics of the past and present (John Beardsley, Malcolm Miles). With its compendium of relevant dialogues, its resistance of pretentiousness, and its critical consideration of the terms inherent to the medium, Knight's study is a compelling and vital resource for scholars and enthusiasts alike.

I enjoyed this book thoroughly and intend to make several personal "Art Pilgrimages" as a result!

Ms. Knight's 'Public Art' is very disappointing. She sets out her agenda/bias in the preface, "I contend that art becomes most fully public when it has palpable populist sentiments - the extension of emotional and intellectual, as well as physical, accessibility to the audience - not a pretension toward such." She uses terms like "accessibility" (which is a loaded term) assuming there is some

kind of shared understanding of the meaning. She goes on to slam art "elitists"; equating them with, "...centurions standing guard over and imposing their culture on others." She defines elitists as having a "need for professionalism...and standards of quality..."Ms. Knight seems to be arguing for a T-ball mentality - everyone should play - when it comes to public art. I find it strange that the people who make a case for populism and accessibility in the arts would never apply the same criteria to own profession. Ms. Knight is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Emerson College. If a position were to come open in Ms. Knight's department, would it be elitist to ask that the applicants had an upper-level degree, teaching experience, that they actually studied art history, that they could even write? Would her department hire, or even consider a person who had none of those qualifications? I don't think so. I think the book would have been better if Ms. Knight would have stuck to analyzing the public art scene and not try to impose her agenda on the subject.

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