

Article title: Urban sign. The *polis* furnished

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Abstract

Just as the linguistic sign, defined by Saussure, is like a double-sided coin: significant + meaning, so the city can be defined by this dichotomy, that is, on the one hand is composed of matter and, second, to function or content. We travel the city as the baudelairean *flâneur* as untimely affiliates walkers to the Situationist International, and so we wear away the tread on the asphalt. Politics, associations and media are responsible for our public space is constantly bombarded by private interests with the consequent impact on the development of citizen relations in semi-privatized public space. The Art brings significant strategies of non-urban places and does so through the Public Art as artistic intervention appropriation of public space by the affirmation of ordinary citizens living there, i.e. by an art to the city and citizenship. Exploring the current state of the contemporary city gives us the framework to review part of urban artistic poetics emerged in recent decades.

Keywords: City, anthropology, art, politics, activismo.

Urban sign. The *polis* furnished

The city is a landscape to explore, an organism that produces a visible urban reality because there are no territories unconscious and passion in it. Just as the linguistic sign, defined by Saussure, is like a double-sided coin: + significant meaning, so the city can be defined by this dichotomy, that is, on the one hand is composed of matter and, second, to function or content. Being filter all this reality is the purpose of our approach to the city understood as a scenic box daily tasks, revealing the desire itself existential encounter, and the similar finding of a citizen uprooted and lost in a dehumanized public space.

"If man must find again the path to the proximity of being, then you must first learn to exist in the nameless. You have to recognize both the seduction of advertising as impotence of the private. Before speaking, man has to be re-let him direct the word [...]. Only then is returned to the word the preciousness of its essence, and man's abode to dwell in the truth of being." (Heidegger, 1972: 71)

As the baudelairean *flâneur*, as a walker, untimely affiliated to the Situationist International, asphalt tread worn away. We, in space-city, reluctantly because of an unhealthy individuality outdated, part of a collective emotional balance compromised by the pressure and intensity of urban energy generates dizzying tide dehumanizes us and disturbs submitting a mathematical calculation of the

time constant we have to go from one place to another in the city fulfilling duties, accumulating noise and images fleeting and empty.

From Ersilia, one of Italo Calvino's *Invisible cities* comes the textile model applicable to the city, and you might think that the particular sequences and group of citizens, cultural and economic factors, interests and fears, hatched the tissue social of those belonging to a place, which are the threads that hatched the history of cities. The basic units of interaction and socialization among citizens, what unites us, the complexity and problems of this condition is inescapably labour matters for the Arts, because even today believe in their function and in their ability to repair or mitigate this worn textile.

"The man has lost his dignity, but art has recovered memorable keeping it in stone." (Schiller 1981: 28)

The philosopher and poet Schiller expressed in these words the ability of art to dignify and free man. Under this statement, and avoiding turning the city into a scapegoat for our problems, we must denounce its shortcomings and seek answers to the problem, assuming our lack of initiative so far and as socially engaged citizens, through artistic practice, to transform and develop a solution from our own experience as part of the city.

The speed, is revealed as a dramatic factor, it was not so for the Futurists, and for some contemporary authors may find some taste in it, as Milan Kundera, literary critic of socialism and proclaimed worldwide implications in relation to today's society:

"Speed is the form of ecstasy that the technological revolution has given to man." (Kundera 1995: 8)

In a city, crossed by flows of energy and human masses swirling unconnected, it is difficult to agree with this view as positive of an urban culture marked by rhythmic intensity and human isolation from the crowd.

They are also triggers, in a city that is sick, general attacks myopia who manage to make theme parks around us who are torn between public and private, to welcome us and join an unbridled consumerism that justifies our existence in the late week, the malls. According to Siebel:

"The European City and its unique public space as a place for politics, the market and self-representation, has filled the historic promise of emancipation of the citizen. And this is reflected through the pursuit of democracy, open market and the increasing individualization." (Siebel 2004: 1)

The boundaries between public and private space are lost and this would not be a problem if it were not for the public and private rights of citizens, often rival and overlap the powerful desires of a society increasingly privatized. Politics, associations and media are responsible for our public space is constantly

bombarded by private interests with the consequent impact on the development of citizen relations in semi-privatized public space.

The city, over the centuries, such as structure and high expression of human intelligence, shows us instructive capacity of the dominant power in the service again and again. It would be improper for an imaginary city, a walker and questioning of the city, not in terms microscopic consider what happens at the place they inhabit. It would be naive to think that no greater importance the urban planning and public spaces map because, as transmitted to us Foucault, architecture and organization is not innocent, however we indoctrinated and domestic. Umberto Eco is pronounced also about a very enlightening, taking in the architecture and urbanism as a form of mass communication:

"If architecture is a set of rhetorical rules designed to give who uses what it already expected (although with unexpected touches very dosed), what is it that distinguishes architecture from other types of mass communication ? The idea that it is a form of mass communication is quite widespread. An operation aimed at human groups, to suit some of your needs and persuade them to live a certain way, can be conceptualized mass communication, even in purely current standard within the meaning of the word, without reference to a sociological problem concrete. "(Eco1986: 287)

It is true, though not always consciously aware of this, which is a showdown, between public and private, that pushes us, agitation caused by public space and alienates directs us, we can not dominate under laws govern our private space, and there is a permanence of intention to manifest frustrated outside inwardly, to convert that public space scenario of internal processes that occur at the same time, private space, so perhaps wear our Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, our cities always watched through television cameras, with uncomfortable seats iron and marble.

The postmodern city, of course, produces non-places, places of transit and stay of non-citizens living solitary individuality without identifying with contemporary dwelling places and exposes the anthropologist and ethnologist Marc Augé:

"If a place can be a place of identity, relational and historical, a space that can not be defined as a space of identity or as relative nor historical, define a non-place." (Augé 2006:83)

The models are continually challenged city in search of a better quality of life for its users; the measures taken in this regard are usually addressed to investment in new infrastructure that withstand heavy traffic and harbouring underground vehicles are crowded interrupting the natural passage of pedestrians and are often topped by a new square and standard. It may seem that the implementation of some measures to improve the quality of life in the city, it combines to make us easier access to the private space of our homes, the private grounds on which we pour all our intention to provide you the best conditioning possible.

Believing any past was better, as stated by the medieval poet Jorge Manrique, and imitate the models of the past in an attempt to humanize the public space is a mistake you should not make. At this point we would make a point to claim a little common sense in the construction of the neo-monuments, talk about the phenomenon of "roundabout" under the artistic expression that is falsely called public art, even though the ultimate expression of an art privatized. The means of artistic production in the public space have changed creating a new aesthetic, a new art should not go back under any circumstances, and should aspire to be, for the public space and citizenship, the blow capable of knotting thousand threads.

Environmental psychology reveals that the appropriation of space, as internalized and subjective experience, is the significance of the place by the subject who exercises. For Lefebvre, the appropriation of space is a vital exercise against alienation of urban life experienced by the contemporary city, in turn, has the disease finisecular, as described by the contemporary philosopher Marcel Sendrail, in his essay *History cultural development of the disease*, as the loneliness of the individual in the crowd around him daily in the scene of his public life in the city.

Within this physical urban, public space is manifesting, more obvious, the behaviour of the individual anti-citizen, he split with the group to which it belongs and that makes citizenship. His presence and social activity in the city spaces dedicated specifically to this purpose, is void. This public space, which is the object of study of this paper, is shown as a desert both individuals and of meaning. It is at this point to consider what is expected of us as inhabitants of the city, perhaps to act in a certain way in these spaces for citizenship, but it is clear that there is a denial of our expression, repression occurs fostered by the individual monitoring of collective life, we owe an observation consistent standards in the city video surveillance because, otherwise, we will be criminalized.

The Art brings significant strategies of non-urban places and does so through the Public Art as artistic intervention appropriation of public space by the affirmation of ordinary citizens living there, by an art to the city and citizenship. The agitation that we produce a public space for confrontation with our private space, the assimilation of the first as the setting for the internal processes in the private space, is something common factor experienced many of the works of the artists who are part of Public Art category. Consider interesting pick in this speech, as shown by the coincidence between the living and the creation process from the studio-like interior space that projects to the public space of the city-an essential part in the work of Siah Armajani, which confess a weakness, because we believe that their work, which goes beyond the aesthetic or memorial, and theoretical discourse that is derived from this do not sufficiently applauded by contemporary art history.

From a very close to architecture, in the early seventies, Siah Armajani creates *Dictionary for building*, a beautiful series of 1000 models in which the artist presents the form, function and status, with respect to space, of all elements of

your home, made a deep study of American vernacular architecture. Create a personal language that later would move to community space and is based on the native architecture to reach a large audience, that there is a bi-directional identification, creates a language and popular culture assumed that also appear in his natural context is the public space. In these models, with an emotionally charged, it becomes apparent Armajani reflection on poetic language as a link and communication channel in relation to the geometry and mathematics, binomial to be a constant in his work.

We can draw a parallel, based on the observation of the mechanism of action of the artist in relation to public space, realizing that, in the same way that, as citizens, we perceive our private space, ordering it according to personal emotional logic, as artists, this experience, or how to make the move inevitably to public space in our city, serving subconscious predisposition employing a poetic perception in which aesthetics and emotion attached to the need for functionality. When the configuration of public space, among other things, does not respond according to our needs causes instability in terms of identifying the individual and the community space. The works Armajani situated in the territory-city constitute a criticism of that in which the contemporary city has become, is this framework that houses works hybrid between sculpture and architecture that receive the citizen empowering them as common space for interaction and relationship, the work is the thread and activating social gathering.

Siah Armajani work is imbued with the influence of early twentieth-century movements such as Bauhaus, De Stijl and Constructivism, of course, since in intended to unite art and life, putting aesthetics in the service of the common good.

The creative space in which it arises Public Art is a conceptual framework of contagion between Sculpture, Architecture and Urbanism, are these matters, and diversity of principles governing their practice, which generate different ways of approaching the new intervention creative in the contemporary city, as well as different definitions originate approximate and reflective methods on the concept of an emerging public art.

In an attempt to make the most the concept of art, and as posture facing the commercialization of artistic creation in the sixties, many people, championing the democratization of art, reclaimed urban public space as a stage for exhibition and artistic experimentation for a set of viewers-broad and diverse social actors and culturally.

All definitions of public art that we find are valid and inaccurate, since this category is defined precisely artistic gathering artistic expressions of nature very different social and aesthetic. This inability to accurately define the set of works, performances or interventions presented under the name Public Art plays a positive role for a job or fleeing discrimination and exclusion that denies archetypal classifications that define or nominated as compliance with inflexible and predetermined characteristics.

The Public Art is a way of expression polyhedral; the multiplicity of its faces is inexhaustible in language used to communicate with citizens. The creators who take their work are equally diverse in terms of their intellectual: architects, artists, actors ... in any case they all have a common base of labour, i.e., public space and its users, as well as an objective similar is the creation for the good citizen and a sense of social action as a basic principle that guides interventions.

We distinguish in this article the experiences and impressions of three theorists and artists of great value, in our opinion, make an important contribution to the definition and consolidation of public art in any case have little nuances that enrich our approach to this artistic work and social. Javier Antonio Remesar Maderuelo and represent two very different models to approach the problem in this category artistic and formulate their bases. Also collect part of Siah Armajani manifest as enormous theoretical contribution of clarity about what surrounds and what is public art.

To Maderuelo the first requirement to be met by a work of public art is precisely found in an urban space freely accessible, continues to claim that the work must give the place of aesthetic significance, communicative and functional, therefore, could not be within the category of public art works that have not been created for a specific space and have been placed there arbitrarily, we would, in that case, with a monument and ornamental trim.

"The task we entrust the sculptors who work in urban space is not easy. It is not that they left running imagination, delight us with masses and volumes produced by untrammelled genius, but, on the contrary, it is necessary that they are able to capture the essence and particular vibrations emanating from the place in which the work is to locate and respond from his genius of artists, each of the particular circumstances." (Maderuelo 1994:19)

The approach Maderuelo approach regarding Public Art Sculpture is made from.

Therefore, we consider it useful to collect some of the ideas of his colleague Dr. Remesar, whose work is closely related to the architecture and, therefore, his theory on the Public Art is significantly different from the previously formulated. The planning is manifested as urban imaginary support while expressing interest Remesar art and urban level, in a communion for the benefit of the city, it is also true that historically is the artwork which seems to be conform to a design existing urban, losing quality comprehensive intervention that combines both fields of knowledge and this work can become dangerously artistic mere ornament. We are also approaching the definition of public art and performing Remesar, as enunciated by the Maderuelo, affects the social background should breathe artistic intervention in public space.

"From my perspective, we can locate the beginning of the concept of public art in the work of the early planners. Cerda, in Barcelona, claiming the need for public ornament new cities, from 1897, starts

talking about Outdoor Art and Urban Art, to define a certain relationship between urban planning and the inclusion of works of art in the very design of the city. "(Remesar 2000:193)

For Antonio Remesar origin Public Art is in the planning while for Maderuelo is in sculpture, both sciences claim for themselves the beginning of this artistic category, although Maderuelo theory argues that starting about the sculpture there is a common space between architecture and artistic search and this state the context in which it originates Public Art.

A very emphatic that communicates through his work is the artist Siah Armajani. Fully immersed in American culture, as we have seen, this theory and makes a complete artist who should be shown on public artist:

"We must abandon the private by the public. We must abandon the exoteric esoteric. We must abandon the metaphysical anthropology. We must abandon the heroic and usually bombastic and ordinary. We must abandon the old and the future for the present. We must abandon the philosophy of poetry. "(Armajani 1999:91)

In this heartfelt declaration of intent expresses the deep enthusiasm for the exercise of public art. Siah Armajani understand this category of art as a helpful art, a way of creating citizens attending that produces a socially and politically engaged art with a democracy that avoids the elevation of power through the monument, as happened in the past, and even today.

The Public Art is the artistic category par excellence directly related and meaningful postmodern city. We have analyzed briefly, through the work of Siah Armajani and Maderuelo definitions and Remesar, some its features and performance strategies. We venture, in conclusion, to make a compendium of definitions that can be heard a modest contribution to the redefinition of public art, therefore: consider public art is any art (painting, sculpture, architecture, urban, scenic, ...), occurred in urban public space, from its genesis as a starting point, take into consideration the space that develops and primarily concerns, backgrounds and aspirations of the human group that inhabits that space, to be amalgamate of a collective consciousness, linked to specific location, so you have the power to signify and, therefore, be an aesthetic, symbolic and functional.

And, coming at the end, we adorn ourselves again of imaginary urban, *flâneur*, returning to the city to explore and nurture new experiences unconscious, passionate and human.

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