

# The Manifesto of Possibilities

Cameron Cartiere  
Birkbeck, University of London



**Man-i-fes-to** *noun* (pl. manifestos): A written declaration of intent or principles; a public declaration of principles, policies, or intentions; a proclamation of opinions and motives.

# An Open Letter to Public Art Administrators



*15-point*



# UNOFFICIAL MANIFESTO



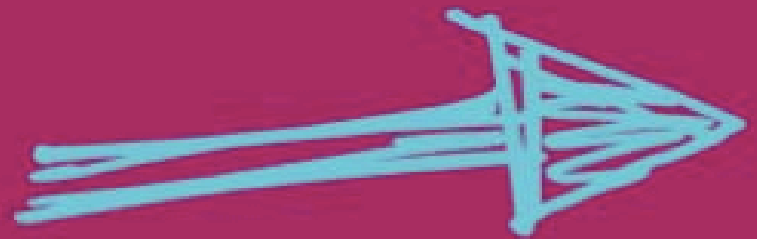
for TELLING THE TRUTH About Public Art

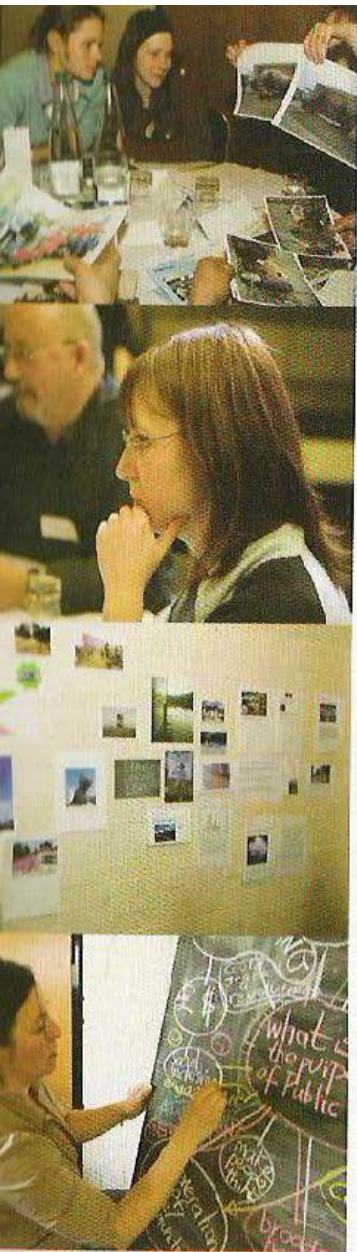
JEANNENE PRZYBLYSKI

1. I am for a public art that aspires to rise above the stature of the merely "appealing."
2. I am for a public art that resists embracing the celebratory as a means of pandering to its public.
3. I am for a public art that seeks to do something besides giving a community "pride" when the community already has it (see no. 2).
4. I am for a public art that makes as much room for irony as it does for earnestness.
5. I am for a public art that believes irony alone is an insufficient perspective, as is earnestness.
6. I am for a public art that doesn't think for a moment that playfulness must equal purposelessness. Living with someone else's whim can be exhausting.
7. I am for a public art that challenges itself to go beyond the mere display of historical artifacts in order to tell a story.
8. I am for a public art that doesn't pretend that everyone's story is intrinsically interesting to everyone else.

# The Manifesto of Possibilities

Commissioning  
Public Art in  
the Urban  
Environment





# A Manifesto for the Public Realm

Produced at the Art U Need Artists Seminar  
Rochford, Essex 30 March 2007

'The manifesto will be inclusive of all buzz words and spin. All boxes will be ticked. All recipients' views will be listened to and evaluated.'

## Working in the Public Realm

Artists will make small and large transformations to communities.

There are many opportunities out there for the artist to explore which require no funding whatsoever. Artists must intervene in the public realm wherever and whenever they can.

Self-initiated projects provide autonomy for the artist.

Break into the institutions and museums of this land and tell them you are there.

Love the space between the Public and the Artist.

Celebrate indifference! Embrace the unusual forms of art. Art will dissipate boredom and forgetfulness.

Getting people involved can be positive even when the artist's project isn't what they expected. Rely less on outcomes; measure the process not just the product.

Creativity (non-social, non-educational) is an integral part of regeneration.

How can we read the Leviathan that is the public? We know what this public looks like but what language do they speak?

After World War II the notion of the public was valued. Now everything is private. The public artist will reverse this trend.

Is there a place for Art: for Art's Sake in public art?

## On Being Commissioned

Artists should be put at the top of the process.

Artists will not be go-betweens.

Public art is not necessarily publicly funded. Support can be found in other sectors.

Support the artist's relationship with funders and in particular their autonomy.

Emphasise that artists are not a quick political tool either for community or regeneration issues. Art is not a sticking plaster for social ills.

Communication is the key. Arrange mixed seminars with local government, potential commissioners, funders and artists.

Artist as facilitator? A justification of art via education; art becomes subservient to the community.

We must use the skills of the many and not just promote the grandiose careers of the few.

Art will be the ultimate tool of social engineering in the regeneration process. Dreams will be tempered by reality.

Taking risks is harder with a small budget.

What agenda? Objects or projects? Who do you please? When does collaboration become compromise? You choose!

## The Artists' Perspective

We Are The Profession! Consult us. Don't tell us!

All art will be relevant to all areas. The process of engagement will allow for artistic freedom. The artist will create the framework and control the network.

Artists come to the public with an open mind and a clean slate.

The artist will have a personality.

Artists must eschew nostalgia.

There was nothing wrong with Barbara Hepworth!

Art will be informed by what we can't do.

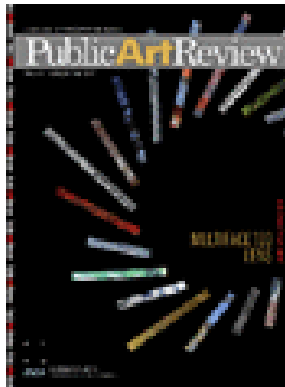
The art world must at long last value the endeavours of the public artist.

The manifesto, as published by  
Commissions East.

# 15-point ★ UNOFFICIAL MANIFESTO ★ for TELLING THE TRUTH About Public Art

JEANNENE PRZYBLYSKI

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### A Manifesto for the Public Realm Produced at the Art U Need Art's Seminar Rochford, Essex 30 March 2007

"The manifesto will be a synthesis of all these words and signs. All boxes will be ticked. All recipients' views will be listened to and evaluated."

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"There are many opportunities out there for the artist to explore what is missing. Finding what is missing. Artists must intervene in the public realm whenever and wherever they can."

Self-initiated projects provide autonomy for the artist.

Break into institutions and discourse of the land and let them pursue them.

Love the space between the Public and the Artist.

Celebrate indifference. Embrace the crucial lines of art. Art will dissipate borders and forgetfulness.

Getting people involved can separate themselves when the artist's project isn't what they expected. Help less or outcomes, results, the process not just the product.

Creativity from social, non-educational will be an integral part of regeneration.

How can we read the Leviathan that is the public? We know what they're doing but how like that what language do they speak?

After Words: Use it the million of the public was valued. Have something to debate. The public artist will emerge the trend.

Is there a place for Art for Art's Sake in public art?

#### On Being Commissioned

Artists should be put at the top of the process.

Artists will not be go-between.

Public art is not necessarily publicly funded. Support can be found in other sources.

Support the artist's relationship with others and in particular their autonomy.

Recognize that artists are not a quick political tool either for community or regeneration issues. Art is not a stocking filler for social ills.

Communication is the key. Arrange mixed forums with local government, political representatives, funders and artists.

After an exhibition? A justification of art via education, or becomes subsequent to the community.

We must use the skills of the money and let just projects to the grassroots careers of the box.

Art will be the ultimate tool of social engineering in the regeneration process. Terms will be negotiated by reality.

Regeneration is headed with a small budget.

What agenda? Objects or projects? Who do you please? When does collaboration become complicity? You choose!

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We Are The Professor! Consult us. Don't tell us!

All art will be relevant to all needs. The process of engagement will allow for artistic leadership. The artist will create the framework and control the network.

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There was nothing wrong with Barbara Hepworth!

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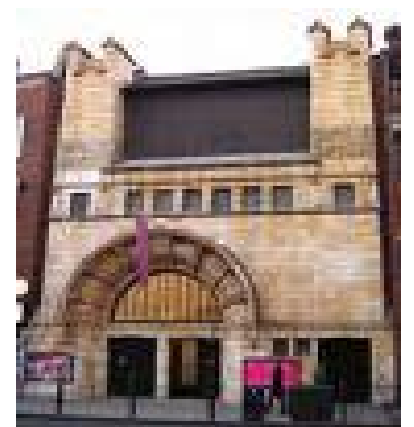
There will need to be original value in the endeavours of the public artist.

The manifesto, as published by Commission East.

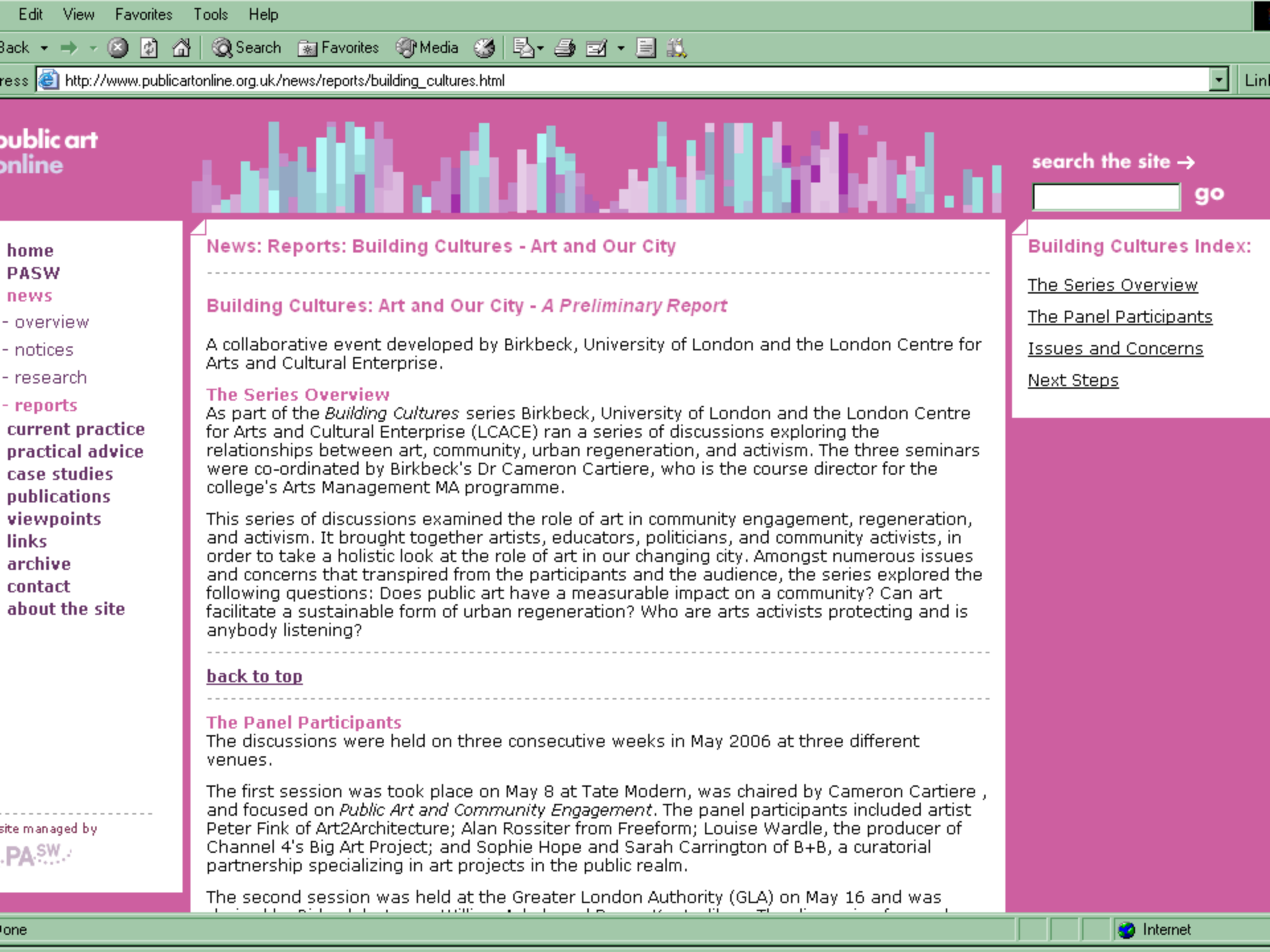
**Building Cultures: Art and Our City**

A three-part series exploring the relationships between art, urban regeneration and activism

**May 8th Public Art and  
Community Engagement**  
May 16th Art, Community  
and Urban Regeneration  
**MAY 24TH ART ACTIVISM  
AND THE COMMUNITY**







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**News: Reports: Building Cultures - Art and Our City**

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**Building Cultures: Art and Our City - A Preliminary Report**

A collaborative event developed by Birkbeck, University of London and the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise.

**The Series Overview**

As part of the *Building Cultures* series Birkbeck, University of London and the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise (LCACE) ran a series of discussions exploring the relationships between art, community, urban regeneration, and activism. The three seminars were co-ordinated by Birkbeck's Dr Cameron Cartiere, who is the course director for the college's Arts Management MA programme.

This series of discussions examined the role of art in community engagement, regeneration, and activism. It brought together artists, educators, politicians, and community activists, in order to take a holistic look at the role of art in our changing city. Amongst numerous issues and concerns that transpired from the participants and the audience, the series explored the following questions: Does public art have a measurable impact on a community? Can art facilitate a sustainable form of urban regeneration? Who are arts activists protecting and is anybody listening?

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**The Panel Participants**

The discussions were held on three consecutive weeks in May 2006 at three different venues.

The first session was took place on May 8 at Tate Modern, was chaired by Cameron Cartiere , and focused on *Public Art and Community Engagement*. The panel participants included artist Peter Fink of Art2Architecture; Alan Rossiter from Freeform; Louise Wardle, the producer of Channel 4's Big Art Project; and Sophie Hope and Sarah Carrington of B+B, a curatorial partnership specializing in art projects in the public realm.

The second session was held at the Greater London Authority (GLA) on May 16 and was

**Building Cultures Index:**

- [The Series Overview](#)
- [The Panel Participants](#)
- [Issues and Concerns](#)
- [Next Steps](#)



LCACE  
London Centre for Arts and Cultural Engagement



## Building Cultures 'A Manifesto of Possibilities'

A one-day action workshop to devise a manifesto for the commissioning of public art – to be distributed to key players in the field of public policy and urban regeneration

**15 February 2007**  
**9.30am–5.00pm**

Birkbeck, University of London  
Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX





# Manifesto of Possibilities

## A Manifesto of Possibilities: Commissioning Public Art in the Urban Environment

Following on from the Birkbeck 'Building Cultures' Seminar Series, Art and OUR City in May 2006 and the action workshop, Building Cultures 2: A Manifesto of Possibilities in February 2007, this manifesto in progress takes forward issues raised by panellists, audience members, and workshop participants. Through this manifesto we are developing significant recommendations to present to the Arts Council England, DCMS, Mayor of London and other central players in policy making and those promoting the role of art in urban change.

Increasingly, people working in diverse aspects of contemporary urban society, from developers to park wardens, are turning to the arts for new ideas, regeneration, problem solving and community bridge building. The employment of artists in these (traditionally non-cultural) fields, where there are other non-art issues and agendas at stake, is becoming the norm. This manifesto is a chance for you to address the uncertainties of commissioning art in areas of urban change, discuss crucial concerns, and devise tangible solutions, knowing they will be presented to key decision makers.

### A request for responses to the Manifesto.

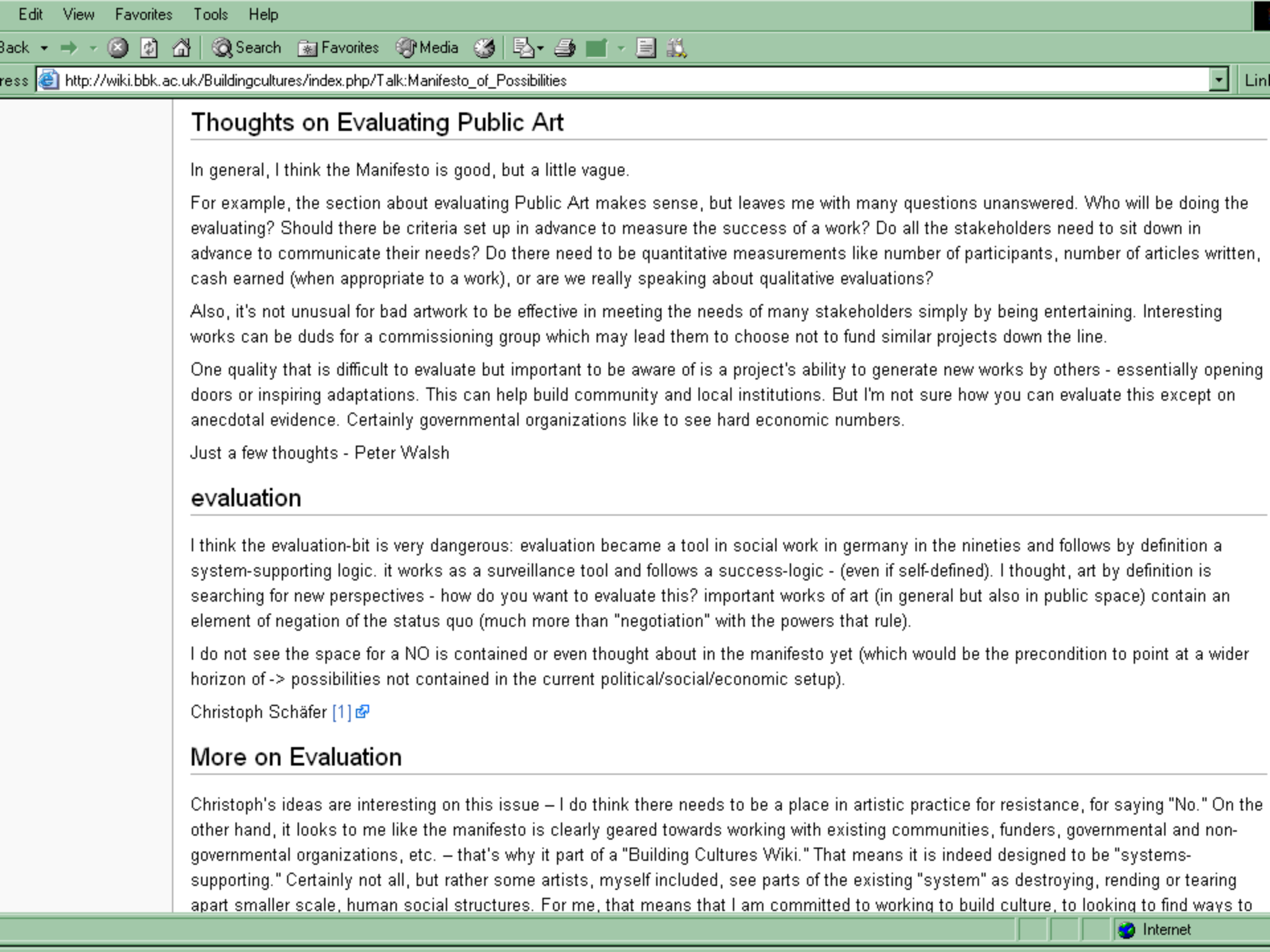
Please read the following six parts of the Manifesto and make your comments, suggestions and responses in the discussion



Mind map for a Manifesto of Possibilities by Sophie Hope



Navigation  
this wiki  
Welcome page  
Categories (all)  
Browse pages  
New pages  
Recent changes  
Help  
external links  
Business Relations Unit  
Search  
Go Search  
help on searching >>



## Thoughts on Evaluating Public Art

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In general, I think the Manifesto is good, but a little vague.

For example, the section about evaluating Public Art makes sense, but leaves me with many questions unanswered. Who will be doing the evaluating? Should there be criteria set up in advance to measure the success of a work? Do all the stakeholders need to sit down in advance to communicate their needs? Do there need to be quantitative measurements like number of participants, number of articles written, cash earned (when appropriate to a work), or are we really speaking about qualitative evaluations?

Also, it's not unusual for bad artwork to be effective in meeting the needs of many stakeholders simply by being entertaining. Interesting works can be duds for a commissioning group which may lead them to choose not to fund similar projects down the line.

One quality that is difficult to evaluate but important to be aware of is a project's ability to generate new works by others - essentially opening doors or inspiring adaptations. This can help build community and local institutions. But I'm not sure how you can evaluate this except on anecdotal evidence. Certainly governmental organizations like to see hard economic numbers.


Just a few thoughts - Peter Walsh

### evaluation

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I think the evaluation-bit is very dangerous: evaluation became a tool in social work in germany in the nineties and follows by definition a system-supporting logic. it works as a surveillance tool and follows a success-logic - (even if self-defined). I thought, art by definition is searching for new perspectives - how do you want to evaluate this? important works of art (in general but also in public space) contain an element of negation of the status quo (much more than "negotiation" with the powers that rule).

I do not see the space for a NO is contained or even thought about in the manifesto yet (which would be the precondition to point at a wider horizon of -> possibilities not contained in the current political/social/economic setup).

Christoph Schäfer [1] 

### More on Evaluation

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Christoph's ideas are interesting on this issue – I do think there needs to be a place in artistic practice for resistance, for saying "No." On the other hand, it looks to me like the manifesto is clearly geared towards working with existing communities, funders, governmental and non-governmental organizations, etc. – that's why it part of a "Building Cultures Wiki." That means it is indeed designed to be "systems-supporting." Certainly not all, but rather some artists, myself included, see parts of the existing "system" as destroying, rending or tearing apart smaller scale, human social structures. For me, that means that I am committed to working to build culture, to looking to find ways to

## The Evaluation

- Evaluation should be integral to the process, embedded from the beginning, providing productive suggestions as a qualitative tool and NOT a prescriptive checklist.
- Acknowledge the varying notions of risk, identify the different criteria for success and allow time for understanding these differences.
- Evaluation should be transparent and honest.
- Evaluation should recognise failure and the potential lessons that can be learned.
- The evaluation process is not limited to the art; it can also include the stakeholders and the commissioning process itself.
- Current timescales for evaluation are too short. There is a need for long-term investment in evaluation. The sustained 'value' of public art needs time to reveal itself. This is a process that may take years. Therefore the aim of evaluation should be informative rather than reactionary.
- Evaluation is most effective when information is disseminated and shared. Commissioners should make publicly available evaluations, debates and archives of public art projects.

## The Commissioning Process

- Commissioning organisations should agree on a strategic public art plan or policy in advance outlining why they are commissioning public art before commissioners are considered. Commitment and support for public art should be demonstrated throughout the organisation. These plans/policies should serve as guidelines but not dictate the content or stifle the creative process.
- Public and private regeneration bodies should invest in training and guidance for commissioners, planners, communities and artists about the different ways of working with art in the public realm.
- There is no definitive or singular 'right way' of creating art for the public realm. The commissioning process needs to recognise the diversity in approaches, interests and skills of artists and reflect this in the aims and objectives of the project.
- Clarity at which stage of the planning process artists should be employed. Acknowledge that some artists prefer to be involved at an early stage.
- Acknowledge the various partners and stakeholders involved and how they will work together (eg. architects, planners, artists, educators, other professionals, community members). The roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the commissioning process should be clarified from the onset and need to be expressed in a universally acknowledged and accepted form of contract.
- Public art is not a universal problem solver for social ills (eg. or a magic formula to solve social injustice). It needs to be recognised that good public art is not a single substitute for good public policy.
- Public art commissioners should be driven by the unique context of a given project rather than overly prescriptive or generic briefs.
- The commissioning process should allow room for and learn from rejection, refusal and negative of the commission by artists and other stakeholders.

## The Manifesto of Possibilities

### The Artist

- If specific proposals for public art are requested in advance, artists should be paid appropriately for the time spent on site visits and developing the proposal.
- While a request for qualifications is an excellent process to narrow the field of potential artists is an open call, the review of previously completed work should not be the only basis for developing a public art project. Where appropriate, sponsoring opportunities for 'first time' public artists will allow for the co-eds seed espousal of creativity and artistic vision within the public art field.
- Assurances should not be made about artists based solely on previous work. Commissioners should remain open to the possibilities of artists developing new approaches and creating original works.
- Artists working in the public realm need to be acknowledged and paid as professionals on a par with other members of the team, such as architects and designers.

### The Community

- The 'community' (or 'the public') is not a generic uniform group of people. Every project based in a community needs to be aware of the specific audiences the work is intended for. These audiences may be particular age groups, ethnicities, economic backgrounds and/or communities of interest. Acknowledgement of who the public artwork or project is for and why should be transparent. There may be different public audiences at different stages of the project.
- Artists work with communities but not subsequently for them. The role of the artist is not necessarily to create communities but rather to make connections.
- Recognise the time it takes for communities to become participants in the public art process and the value of sustaining long-term relationships and networks.

### The Art

- Public art is NOT a single art form. There are a multitude of approaches, methods and motivations for public art. Acknowledge and celebrate the depth and breadth of the field.
- There is cultural value in commissioning temporary public art. The effects can be as dramatic, significant and sustainable as permanent works.
- Public art is often placed in the precarious position of trying to address all stakeholders' agendas and needs - recognise the limitations and possibilities of public art. Be ambitious but realistic. Remember, "context remains half the work" (originally stated by the Artists Placement Group in the 1960s).

### The Curator

- The importance of the curatorial role in public art commissioning needs to be recognised as a supporting, co-producing and, overseeing negotiation and artistic vision, from the concept to completion of a public art project.
- Curators need to have access to funders and stakeholders to develop a working relationship throughout the commissioning process. The curator can ensure a balance is struck between risk and risk management enabling innovation and experimentation.
- Investment in curatorial training and mentoring of public art administrators will help to facilitate creativity throughout the administrative process. Simply changing one's title from 'administrator' to 'curator' is not an acceptable substitute for proper training and curatorial expertise.

# Manifesto of Possibilities

## London Launch

**6pm–8.30pm, 31 January 2008**

Wellcome Collection, Conference Centre, 183 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE

An evening event to 'test-drive' the Manifesto of Possibilities – a manifesto relating to commissioning public art in the urban environment.

The Building Cultures Series continues with the London launch of the Manifesto of Possibilities – a manifesto relating to commissioning public art in the urban environment. Over the past year, Birkbeck, University of London and the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise (LCACE) has been running a series of seminars and action workshops to develop this discussion document in response to the uncertainties of commissioning art in areas of urban change.

This evening event is a chance for you to engage in active dialogue with commissioners, artists, architects and developers using the Manifesto as a starting point.

#### Who should attend?

Individuals working with art and urban change: Artists, urban planners, arts officers, architects, academics and educators, developers, politicians, voluntary sector managers, residents, activists, and those working in the public realm.

#### Purpose of the event

Using the Manifesto as a guide and case-studies from the field, participants will:

- uncover the conflicting aspects of the commissioning process
- identify key factors for engaging artists on design teams
- share effective means of evaluation
- explore alternative ways of working with

the community

- examine the role of the Curator in developing public art projects
- challenge the trend of compromised art in the public realm.

#### Co-authors of the Manifesto

- Dr Cameron Cartiere, Arts Management, Birkbeck, University of London.
- Sophie Hope, co-founder of B+B.

#### Costs

£35 including drinks, light refreshments, and a copy of the Manifesto

#### Concessions

£25 Artists and self-employed  
£15 students and unemployed

#### Registration and payment

Please visit:

<https://www2.bbk.ac.uk/business/bc.html>  
Space is limited so don't delay.

#### Further information

Contact Isabel Lamacraft,  
Business Relations Unit,  
Birkbeck, University of London  
Tel: 020 7079 0736

The Building Cultures Series is developed in collaboration with Goldsmiths College and Queen Mary, University of London.



LCACE  
London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise









[www.manifestoofpossibilities.co.uk](http://www.manifestoofpossibilities.co.uk)