



### ***50/50: Important, Impressive, Influential and Personal Pivotal Public Art of the Past 50 Years***

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By Jennifer McGregor

Compiling a list of 50 significant works of public art over the past 50 years was a daunting task. Rather than approach it as a “top 50” list, I reflected on how this pluralistic field has been shaped by innovative projects, programs, and artists. After starting my own list, I conducted an informal survey, asking colleagues to identify three personally pivotal projects to help me recognize projects with resilient staying power. The first 5 exemplify the themes that organized the other 45 projects:

- The driving concept of *art in public places*, coinciding with the “percent for art” funding mechanism, is represented by Alexander Calder’s *La Grande Vitesse*, which was funded through a new NEA, exemplified citizen impetus, and ultimately became a symbol of Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Isamu Noguchi’s playscapes—conceived in the 1930s and realized in 1976 with *Piedmont Park Playscape*—embrace *functionality*, an overarching shift that defines the field. This recently restored project is a model of 50 fruitful years of commissions, underscoring significant collection management and conservation issues.
- With *Franklin Court*, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates introduced a novel model for relating history to site, and invented a vocabulary to convey complex content through public art.
- Robert Smithson’s iconic *Spiral Jetty* (1970)—recognized for its scale, relation to the land, and artistic vision—launched a new attention to the landscape that, along with other works presented, has led to environmental engagement.
- Christo and Jeanne-Claude engaged the public on multiple levels with *Running Fence*, including approvals, installation, and finally with an indelible experience. The artist-initiated approach is vital to the field and represented in each of the categories.

1. Alexander Calder, *La Grande Vitesse*, 1969, Grand Rapids, Mich.
2. Isamu Noguchi, *Piedmont Park Playscape*, 1976, restored 2009, Atlanta, Ga.
3. Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc., *Franklin Court*, 1976, Philadelphia, Penn.
4. Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, Great Salt Lake, Utah
5. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Running Fence*, 1972–1976, Marin and Sonoma Counties, Calif.

#### **Art in Public Places**

6. Jean Dubuffet, *Group of Four Trees*, installed 1972, New York, N.Y.
7. Claes Oldenburg, *Clothespin*, 1976, Philadelphia, Penn.
8. Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, 1981, New York, N.Y.
9. John Ahearn, *Bronx Sculpture Park: Toby and Raymond, Daleesha, Corey*, 1991, Bronx, N.Y.
10. Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego, Calif. Examples shown: Robert Irwin, *Two Running Violet V Forms*, 1983; Terry Allen, *Trees*, 1986; Bruce Nauman, *Vices and Virtues*, 1988; Alexis Smith, *Snake Path*, 1992
11. Louise Bourgeois, *Maman*, 2001, New York, N.Y.
12. Millennium Park, Chicago, Ill.: Anish Kapoor, *Cloud Gate*, 2005; Jaume Plensa, *Crown Fountain*, 2004
13. Alice Aycock, *Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks*, 2005–2007 Nashville, Tenn.
14. Acconci Studio, *Roof Like a Liquid Flung Over the Plaza*, 2004, Memphis, Tenn.
15. Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing #1259: Loopy Doopy (Springfield)*, 2008, Springfield, Mass.

## Functionality/Design Integration

16. Sherry Markowitz, Andrew Keating, Buster Simpson, *Untitled*, Viewland/Hoffman electrical substation, 1979, Seattle, Wash.
17. Wiesner Building, 1985, MIT Arts and Media, Cambridge, Mass.: I. M. Pei (architect); Scott Burton, *Settee, Bench, and Balustrade*; Kenneth Noland, *Here-There*; Richard Fleischner, *Courtyard*
18. Battery Park City Authority, New York, N.Y.; examples shown: Mary Miss, Stanton Eckstut, Susan Childs, *South Cove*, 1987; Tom Otterness, *The Real World*, 1992
19. Jody Pinto, *Fingerspan*, 1987, Philadelphia, Penn.
20. Siah Armajani, Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge, 1988, Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis, Minn.
21. Michael Singer, Linnea Glatt, Solid Waste Management Facility, 1993, Phoenix, Ariz.
22. Laurie Lundquist, *Nisbet Road Pedestrian Bridge*, 1997, Phoenix, Ariz.
23. Sheila Klein, *Underground Girl*, 2000, Los Angeles, Calif.

## Memory/History/Fostering Art-Initiated Ideas and Opening New Media

24. Maya Lin, National Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, 1981, Washington, D.C.
25. Sheila Levrant de Brettville, *Biddy Mason: Time and Place*, 1991, Los Angeles, Calif.
26. Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Bunker Hill Monument Projection*, 1998, Charleston, Mass.
27. John Bennett, Gustavo Bonevardi, Julian LaVerdiere, Paul Myoda, Richard Nash Gould, Paul Marantz, *Tribute in Light*, begun in 2002, New York, N.Y.
28. Boys and Girls High School, Brooklyn, N.Y.: Edward Wilson, *Middle Passage*, 1978; Ernest Crichlow, *Untitled*, 1976
29. Judy Baca/SPARC, *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, begun in 1976, Los Angeles, Calif.
30. Creative Time's Art on the Beach, New York, N.Y.; examples shown: Laurie Hawkinson, John Malpede, Erika Rothenberg, *Freedom of Expression National Monument*, 1984; Dennis Adams and Nicholas Goldsmith, *Podium for Dissent*, 1985
31. David Hammonds, *Higher Goals*, 1986, Brooklyn, N.Y.
32. Culture in Action, 1992, Chicago, Ill., artists: Mark Dion, Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio, Haha, Suzanne Lacy, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Daniel J. Martinez, Robert Peters
33. Project Row Houses, Houston, Tex., initiated by Rick Lowe, opened in 1994
34. Ann Chamberlain and Ann Hamilton, *Untitled*, 1996, San Francisco, Calif.
35. Pepon Osorio with Congreso de Latinos Unidos, *I have a story to tell you*, 2003, Philadelphia, Penn.
36. Jenny Holzer, *For Pittsburgh*, 2004, Pittsburgh, Penn.
37. Janet Cardiff, *Her Long Black Hair*, 2005, New York, N.Y.
38. *Messages in the Public*, Times Square, New York, N.Y.; example shown: Keith Haring, 1982
39. Washroom project, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wis.; examples shown: Ann Agee, *Sheboygan Men's Room*; Merrill Mason, *Emptying and Filling*
40. Lights on Tampa, Tampa, FL, examples shown: Jose Orta, *Luminographic Concert*, 2006; Erwin Redl, *Fade III*, 2006
41. Carnival Center for the Performing Arts, Miami, Fla.; Dolores and Sanford Ziff Ballet Opera House and John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall, examples shown: Anna Valentina Murch, *Water Scores*, 2006; Robert Rahway Zakanitch, *Peacock Curtain*, 2006
42. MTA Arts for Transit, New York, N.Y.; Nancy Spero, *Artemis, Acrobats, Divas and Dancers*, 2001, 66th Street–Lincoln Center Station; Samm Kuncze, *Under Bryant Park*, 2002, 42d Street–Bryant Park/Fifth Avenue Station

## Environment

43. Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscape*, proposed 1965, planted 1978, New York, N.Y.
44. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Touch Sanitation*, 1978–1980, New York, N.Y.
45. Robert Morris, *Untitled: Johnson Pit #30*, 1979, King County, Wash.
46. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979–1984, Roslyn, Vir.
47. Buster Simpson, *Host Analog*, 1991, Portland, Ore.

48. Mel Chin, *Revival Field*, 1993, St. Paul, Minn.
49. Mel Chin, *Fundred Dollar Bill Project*, Operation Pay Dirt, started 2008, nationwide
50. Patricia Johanson, Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility, Petaluma, Calif.

Finally, over the past year we have lost several very influential women, including Jeanne Claude, Louise Bourgeois, Nancy Spero, and Coosje van Bruggen, so I selected projects that celebrate their contributions.

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