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.


**Art in Public Places**

Functionality/Design Integration

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
20. Siah Armajani, Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge, 1988, Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis, Minn.

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

33. Project Row Houses, Houston, Tex., initiated by Rick Lowe, opened in 1994
35. Pepon Osorio with Congreso de Latinos Unidos, I have a story to tell you, 2003, Philadelphia, Penn.
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, Faded 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, Acrobat, Divas and Dancers, 2001, 66th Street–Lincoln Center Station; Samm Kunce, 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.
45. Robert Morris, Untitled: Johnson Pit #30, 1979, King County, Wash.
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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