

Destroyed public art works: a critical reflection

Thursday 17 February 2011

firstsite event organised in partnership with curating courses at University of Essex and RCA.

Venue: University of Essex

Time: 1.30pm – 6pm



firstsite, a visual arts organisation in Colchester, is holding a half day conference for curators, students and artists on the subject of destroyed public art works.

The impetus for the event is the recent destruction by fire of *Luna Park*, by Heather & Ivan Morison, a life size model of a fictitious dinosaur which was due to come to Colchester in October 2010 after an eight week stint in Portsmouth. The cause of the fire is as yet unknown (arson or an electrical fault).

The sculpture's demise offers a potentially rich and timely starting point for a discussion around the nature of art works which have been destroyed by natural causes or by human action.



Issues to consider

The conflicting nature of public concerns versus those of the visual arts community (Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*).

The memory of a project extending far beyond its physical lifespan – how it enters the popular imagination through the act of destruction (Rachel Whiteread's *House*).

The integrity of an artist's intention (Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* - debate over whether to leave it to natural elements or restore it).

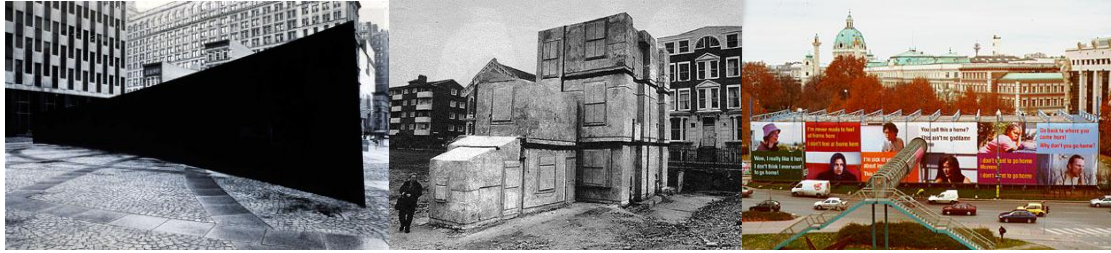
Action by members of the public / councilors as an anti-art statement or political tool (Rachel Whiteread's *House*).

The role of the press in creating a public response (Jordan Baseman's *I Hate Boston and Boston Hates Me*).

The necessity for the artist and commissioning organisation to embrace the possibility of failure or destruction as part of a public project. Link to Nicholas Bourriaud's concept of the 'ascent of the precarious'.

Speakers & timetable

- 1.30 Meet at Art Exchange, University of Essex for refreshments
- 1.50 Walk to Senate Room, University of Essex
- 2.00 **Jes Fernie**, Associate Curator, firstsite: introduction and outline of the afternoon
- 2.10 **Claire Doherty**, Director, *Situations*
- 2.40 **Ivan Morison**, artist: *Luna Park*
- 3.10 Discussion
- 3.35 **Joe Kerr**, Head of Dept of Critical & Historical Studies, RCA: Lubetkin's Lenin memorial
- 4.00 **Jennifer Mundy**, Head of Collection Research, Tate and **Fiontan Moran**, Researcher for Lost Art Project, Tate & Channel 4
- 4.25 **Jordan Baseman**, artist: *I Hate Boston, Boston Hates Me*
- 4.50 Discussion
- 5.30 Refreshments
- 6.00 Finish



Audience/ participants

Audience: curating & art history students, curators, researchers.

Participants / discussants:

- **Michaela Crimmin**, independent curator and RCA curating contemporary art tutor
- **Joanne Bushnell**, director, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth
- **Judith Stewart**, artist / curator, worked on Ken Lum's *There's no place like home* project in Hastings
- **Andreas Lang** / publicworks re Mobile Porch

Partners

- RCA MA Curating Contemporary Art, Michaela Crimmin, course tutor in commissioning art for the public realm
- University of Essex, MA Curating Contemporary Art, Matthew Poole, Programme Director, Centre for Curatorial Studies

Places for this event are limited.

Contact Jes Fernie for details: jes@jesfernie.com

Images

Luna Park, Heather & Ivan Morison, detail – after fire, Portsmouth 2010

Ash and Silk Wall, Vong Phaophanit, Thames Barrier, London 1993

Luna Park, Heather & Ivan Morison, Portsmouth 2010

Spiral Jetty, Robert Smithson, Utah 1970

Tilted Arc, Richard Serra, Federal Plaza, New York 1981

House, Rachel Whiteread, Bethnal Green, London 1993

There's no place like home, Ken Lum, Hastings, 2003

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