socrates sculpture park
7 may 1989 to 11 march 1990
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NOTES ON THE EXHIBITION
Socrates Sculpture Park is a laboratory for creative experimentation initiated by the Athena Foundation. Art Sculpture City is the fifth exhibition in four years on this site. It has taken place in the next to last year of a lease granted by the City of New York. Sculpture City is the result of proposals solicited by Vera List.

and submitted to the artists and animators who constitute the direction of Socrates Sculpture Park. For this exhibition the group included: Richard Bellamy, Ruth Cummings, Terry Lee Dill, Mel Edwards, Maren Hassinger, Enrico Martignoni, Ivana Mestrovic, Richard Nonas, Sara Pasti, Sai Romano, and Irving Sandler.

Socrates Sculpture Park is made possible, in part, by grants from: The Office of the Queens Borough President, Claire Shulman; The Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of New York; The Queens Council on the Arts; The New York State Council on the Arts; and The National Endowment for the Arts.

CATALOG
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Socrates Sculpture Park
P.O. Box 6259
Long Island City NY 11106
Photography: Dominque Evrard
P. Bellamy (Wallach)
Leslie (Lessick)
Gordon (Gordon)
Tanteri (Tanteri)
Design: Integral Concept - Pippa Lionni
Production: Florence Bottoli and Ulrike Gauder
Typesetting: Integral Concept
Photo engraving, printing: Fleetwood Litho + Letter
Ignorance of the real natural world threatens us. The myth of progress is a threat and the assumption on the part of the state that it has created order also threatens us.

The knowledge gained at Socrates has come from the work of changing the reality of 5 acres of waterfront land. What was abandoned is now cared for, what was barren is now fertile, what was invisible is seen, and reinvented, by hundreds of people.

Socrates is a place we struggle with: winter and summer, through drugs and violence, tides and phases of the moon. It takes us away from our individual selves and makes us be a part of our larger self - the whole universe.

Socrates is about constant reflection and work. The direct experience of nature and society has brought knowledge - and it has been good. To communicate this awareness and sense of community is a struggle. The work of creating an environment has been done well. Could it have been done better?

Socrates is something positive for people. The Park is an attempt to do something ignored by others. Something beautiful has been created, something people can feel positive about. We may not win the struggle to keep open space for the public at Socrates or to keep exploration of form, space, light, and color as a part of Hallett's Cove; but, we have laid a foundation. It is a foundation created with an enormous amount of work, and yet, we have done nothing which cannot be done elsewhere.

Enrico Martignoni
KLAUS ILLI
"On the Way to Ithaka I", 1989
6'3" x 4' x 23"
Wood, Plywood
TOM BILLS
"Who's Doubting Who", 1989
16" x 4' x 10'
Cast Concrete
33 Tons
ELAINE LORENZ
"Reversal", 1989
10' x 20' D
EPS Foam, Wood, Concrete, Earth, Prostrate Juniper (Juniperus Sargentii)
ROBERT RESSLER
"Huddled Masses", 1989
12' x 10' x 10'
White Oak, Red Oak, Steel, Tar, Water
ROBERT RESSLER
"Baruchashe'em", 1989
14' x 32'D
Assorted Hardwoods
RON FONDAW
"Now + Never", 1989
9' x 9'6" x 30'
Wood, Cement, Dirt,
Stains
HENNER KUCKUCK
“Group II”, 1969
Three Sculptures
10’ x 3’ x 4’
16’ x 2-1/2’ x 6’
8’ x 4’ x 10’
Steel
DONALD LIPSKI
"Sink", 1989
4' x 5' D
Cast Iron Smelting Pot,
Zinc, Water, Acrylic
TIM WATKINS
"Tidal Bloom", 1989
Three Sculptures
Each 8' x 3'D
Steel Tubes, Pipe, Woks,
Aluminum Mesh, Plexiglass,
Copper
LILLIAN BALL
"Triad", 1989
8' x 10' x 28'
Handforged Lead,
Stainless Steel Mesh
RICCARDO BIONDI

"Avi", 1989

Three sculptures
9'9" x 12" x 12"
10'8" x 10" x 17"
10'3" x 11" x 17"

Wood
SCOTT GILLIAM WITH DICK ROBINSON, COMPOSER
"BIG JU-JU (Big Spirit)", 1989
60" x 84" x 112"
Aluminum, Steel (Enamelled), Solar Generated Sound (Electronics)

KENNY GREENBERG
"The Runner", 1989
6" x 3" x 30"
Neon, Glass, Electricity
JOHN MORSE
"Untitled", 1989
10' x 16'
Automotive Enamel
RONALD BLADEN
"Three Elements", 1965
9' x 4' x 30'
Painted and
Polished Aluminum
BILL AND MARY BUCHEN
SONIC ARCHITECTURE
"Sound Observatory"
1989-90
8' x 32' x 32'
Earth, Stone, Steel,
Grass, Sound

ZORAN MOJSILOV
"Camel", 1989
7' x 10' x 10'
Wood
MARK DI SUVERO
"Telltale for Gerard Manley
Hopkins", 1989
34' x 50' x 50'
Steel
the 7th of may
PAUL WALLACH
"Room To Move"
12' x 17" x 39'
Wood, Rebar
HELEN LESSICK
"WATERHOUSE"
House: 9' x 7' x 9'Deep
Pond: 12' x 13' x 1'Deep
Water, Hose, Steel Pipe,
Wood, Paint
the 22nd of October
MARK GORDON
"Volcano"
2' x 19'D
Clay, Brick, Stone, Copper
MATTHEW TANTERI
"Sarah"
12' x 17' x 39'
Stairway corridor:
Low Pressure Sodium Luminaire and "Bug" Light
Gallery: Argon Laser, Helium Neon Laser, Optics and
Mounts, Gel, Scrim, Fog, Reflective Paint, Cord,
Blacklights
KLAUS ILLI
My sculptures relate to tools, functional objects or perhaps parts of machinery; some allow for architectural connotations. They may also evoke an association to the human torso. Through these multiple readings the sculptures may tread a fine line between representation and abstraction.
"On the Way to Ithaka I" has a clear horizontal orientation which for me implies feelings that relate to a lying body position. Calm and silence are aspects of those feelings. Working with the surroundings this form suggests at the same time a potential movement.
Special thanks to Bettina!

ELAINE LORENZ
Reflecting the fragility of natural vegetation and the strength of geological formations, this work evokes basic memories of secret and special places, both real and imaginary. The viewer’s senses of smell, touch and vision are all involved as they are drawn in and channeled through the site. The focus of my work is the contradictory relationship between people and nature: our appreciation of its beauty and life sustaining forces and coexistent technological greed and destruction of the earth. My sculpture pays homage to the capriciousness of nature; at the same time, it addresses human attempts to control and restrict nature.
Special thanks to the staff and crew at Socrates Park and all my good friends who helped me with this piece.

ROBERT RESSLER
I have no secrets. My work is drawn directly from experiences and perceptions often painful, some ugly, some brutal which somehow when transposed into sculpture become hopeful and inviting instead of fatalistic. For me, this is the reason for making art.
Consequently, my sculptures are not objects but places, places to be entered. They relate to the ground, some seeming to have come up out of the earth rather than having been planted there. Often this work is referred to as primitive, but if primitive means drawing from one’s own contemporary perceptions and tribal remembrance, shaping these into sculpture from raw materials with one’s own hand, I suppose I’m a primitive.
My thanks to Mark and Enrico for their true support and assistance, allowing me to develop my work without constraint.

RON FONDAY
"Now + Never" is the latest in a series of works that talk about man’s built environments in relation to nature and the primal element of earth. The piece reflects past memories + experiences which raise questions about time + permanence.

HENNER KUCKUCK
After many years of building abstract and kinetic works, the coincidence of the development of my figurative steel pieces and the growth of Socrates Sculpture Park provided the chance to build and exhibit a group of female warriors. Thanks to SSP, they find themselves in a strange surrounding. My figures, welded from industrial pipes, stand In a wasteland before Manhattan as if coming from nowhere, ancient icons, mythic robots with a glock of humor. Helpless yet hopeful, powerful yet fragile, they are waiting: aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive... yet are nothing other than pipes with a touch of gesture.

DONALD LIPSKI
Special thanks to: Richard Barnett of The Aluminum Smelting Co. of Cleveland, Ohio and Tubro Plastic Co.

TIM WATKINS
"Tidal Bloom" consists of three flower-like units, planted in the East River, that function with the changing tide. That is, they open at high tide and close at low tide and move freely with the breeze and currents. They symbolize life and growth, making references both to the life of the river before industrialization, and to the possible "man-made life" of the future. The title "Tidal Bloom" stems from the phenomenon of ever-increasing algae infestations of tides in the world's oceans, a direct result of man's pollution.
My concerns as an artist deal with our relationship to nature. I am trying to create visually rich objects that when juxtaposed with "manhandled" sites create a reference point for the viewer to take the time to see the natural world around us.
Special thanks to Robert Dorner, Dorcom International and Enrico.

LILLIAN BALL
"Trial" is three independent shapes which come together from distinct viewpoints to make a solid form. Each separate view, like each separate piece, offers few clues as to the reality of the total sculpture. Walking around "Trial", an entirely different set of shapes begins to emerge. The activity of looking becomes an experience of discovery.
Handforged lead is a technique I developed to make metal sculpture myself in a more integrated way than casting or welding. Full scale wire mesh patterns are perforated with molten lead. The resulting flat sheets are folded and hammered into the final shape. Regardless of the form's combined complexity, each is made from a single piece of material.
In "Trial", the whole is comprised of parts which are in turn made from a whole. The hands-on process and integrity of the work depends on this concept of completion.
Special thanks go to: Suppliers - Estey Wire Works and Ney Products, Inc.
Steve from Adirondack Assistants - Nancy Welch, Bill Tully, Mike Merchant
All those at the Park involved with making this sculpture possible.
RICCARDO BIONDI
They are personages, personifications, man’s internal 
"Demons" (1), direct 
descendants of personified gods, 
of monoliths, dolmens, 
monoblocks - abstract and 
amimistic at the same time; 
external signs contemporaneous 
with an internal unconscious 
millions of years old. 
Representations of three of many 
symbols, of the internal 
characteristics of man: the first 
of the capacity to abstract, 
transcend; the middle one 
(descendant of Pan, the devil) of 
irrationality, c’ sudden and 
unexpected panic; the third of 
man’s search for coherence, his 
"justifications", rationalizations: it 
is a soldier of religion, a 
"bishop", struck, however, by a 
laceration which damages this 
coherence. It is also the theme of 
division, as the positive tension 
of the tendency towards unity (2), 
and as the knowledge of 
the impossibility of obtaining such 
monotheistic coherence and 
quity (3).

(1) In the Greek sense, an entity 
which unexpectedly possesses 
you and guides your actions 
beyond your understanding and 
will.
(2) Also of the internal with the 
external.
(3) It is the monotheistic religions 
that tend toward this coherence, 
which crush all the aspects, the 
"demons", in oneself, ...it is the 
theological religions that left and 
leave space for all the facets of 
the human being.

SCOTT GILLIAM WITH 
DICK ROBINSON, COMPOSER
A visit. Touching down, observing, 
responding. 
A thing/place where forces must 
sum closely to zero. 
A pattern of dependent 
originations. 
Thanks to: Don Hassler, Mark, 
Rico, Ivana, Paul, Anne, Melissa 
and Richard.

KENNY GREENBERG
Four neon figures sequentially 
flash on a dark canvas of urban 
night. The mind is convinced 
there is motion. 
Turn of the century technology 
multiplies and divides nature’s 
electrical energy to create a brief 
cartoon of light. 
The mix of random and rhythmic 
change is the result of an on/off 
switch regularly acting on the 
inertia of a power distributing 
device. 
Thanks to Michael Post for his 
assistance on the installation.

JOHN MORSE
The mural is an enlargement of a 
collage I made early in 1989. I 
created the original using blue 
paper from a Tiffany’s jewelry 
catalogue, green paper from a 
Bahamas tourist brochure and 
pink plastic from a shopping bag. 
I chose this collage because the building’s 
owners wanted a picture of the ocean. 
Thanks to Enrico Martignoni for 
his help and inspiration.

RONALD BLADEN (1918-1988)
"How do you make the inside the 
outside?" 
The engine, the scaffold, the 
weight - - the energy?" 
"Untitled, 1965 (unfinished)." 
Three elements each 
108" x 48" x 120" x 21". 
Painted aluminum and wood. 
Exhibited at The Jewish Museum, 
New York, April 27 through 
June 12, 1966, in a show 
entitled "PRIMARY STRUCTURES: 
Younger American and British 
Sculptors". 
(The statement above is from the 
catalog of "Primary Structures").

BILL AND MARY BUCHEN 
SONIC ARCHITECTURE
"Sound Observatory" (three drum 
seats, earth drum and parabolic 
reflector), is an ongoing project at 
Socrates. The work is designed to 
exchange sonic energy between 
people and place. It is an empty 
vessel, not truly fulfilled unless 
there are people within, exploring 
and playing. Seats serve as 
drums, the earth is a resonator 
and a parabolic dish reflects and 
beams sound around the site to 
the river. Future components will 
draw from the world’s 
instrument, the park’s 
inspiration and the people that 
use the site. 
Socrates Sculpture Park is a 
laboratory. It is an experiment of 
the communal love of art and land 
that binds people to place. What 
you hear is what you get. 
This project is supported in part 
by the generous grants from: 
Art Matters 
The David Bermant Foundation: 
Color, Light, Motion 
The National Endowment for the 
Arts (InterArts) 
The New York State Council on 
the Arts (Visual Arts)

ZORAN MOJISLOV
This piece is an outgrowth of an 
idea for a bench that is made of 
elbows instead of feet. 
Special thanks to Paul who 
named this sculpture "Camele". 
Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

MARK DI SUVERO
The unity-rapport between people 
forest fire fighting or working 
together against flood or 
earthquake is one of the most 
beautiful parts of human nature. 
At Socrates Sculpture Park I have 
seen artists helping other artists, 
the community working to build a 
park out of a city dump-site, 
neighbors giving materials, 
money, space, or physical effort 
on a volunteer basis. This is one 
of the most powerful forces of a 
city: constructive cooperation 
born directly out of a community. 
If New York City could multiply 
this type of thinking and action 
then New York could become 
beautiful and civilized.

In this sculpture park, this 
riverfront space with skyscraper 
horizon, sculptors have met the 
challenge of their dreams, open 
spaces and whatever materials 
we could afford to provide. Just 
as any expert crane operator 
works with the invisible point we 
call center of gravity (and not the 
volume appearance) so too the 
real artist works with INNER 
BEAUTY in a search for forms in 
dreamtime. Inner beauty is the 
true value of sculpture. People 
have it too: look around you at 
the people in your life, beyond the 
cosmetic external surface. Do 
you recognize those who have 
INNER BEAUTY?

PAUL WALLACH
Dependency - 
Physical and spatial, 
Related through visual language, 
Solidifies existing dialogue - 
Room and movement.
HELEN LESSICK
"WATERHOUSE" is a two part sculpture of sprinkling house and holding pond. The house rained upon itself from a misting hose roof. The pond, holding oil-slicked water, created a refuge for a tiny floating house, an echo of the larger structure. The single-day event of "WATERHOUSE" cleared the air, watered the grass, and misted children young and old. "WATERHOUSE", on a basic level, is a microcosm of that large water house, our planet.

Thanks: My deep appreciation goes to Socrates, Athena and Enrico for making everything "possible". Special thanks to Gene Flores for finding a plumber on Sunday.

MARK GORDON
Tusks and horns: ancient icons, trans-lingual markers... Paleolithic Czechoslovakia, Anatolian Catal Huyuk, Elamite Susa, Minoan Knossos, present day Madagascar... talismans of power, symbols of protection and ritual sacrifice.

A few weeks ago in Luzerne, Switzerland, the Convention on Trade of Endangered Species adopted a resolution on the African elephant, declaring it an endangered species. Perhaps the yearly decimation of the elephant population will cease. As long as ivory is considered a highly-valued market commodity throughout most of the world, consumer greed will continue to fuel increasingly desperate - and brutally efficient - poaching. "Volcano" was burned on site. The dedication was offered to the West African deity Obatala, embodiment of wisdom and protectress of the elephant.

MATTHEW TANTERI
"SaraS" was designed for the Socrates Museum Gallery for a one day viewing on October 22, 1989 from 2pm to sunset. My vision of this "site-specific" work was to integrate the dynamics of daylight and laser light to actively define and modify the indoor environment.

Following is a visitor's experience of the installation:
The building is entered from midafternoon daylight. A staircase lit with yellow monochrome light begins to saturate color vision. The absence of color creates an after image of complementary blue hue. A "conditioning" is affected into the interior space. The viewer ascends to the second floor doorway and enters a room containing an atmospheric blue-violet light. Overhead a dynamic perspective opens into view.

Un ancien terrain vague dans lequel poussent des objets de pierre, de terre, d'acier, de bois... Un ancien terrain vague dans lequel circulent d'artiste en artiste des outils, des coups de main... Quelles drôles de choses j'ai vues au fond de mon objectif à Socrates Park!

An old deserted open space where pieces of stone, of earth, of steel, of wood are growing...

DOMINIQUE EVRARD
Un ancien terrain vague dans lequel poussent des objets de pierre, de terre, d'acier, de bois... Un ancien terrain vague dans lequel circulent d'artiste en artiste des outils, des coups de main...

PIppo Lionni
Notes on the conclusion... or a letter to Enrico... I think that there are basically two ways to break out of the confinement of our private status quo and to question the world and our perception of it. One is revolution and the other is the making of art. Neither guarantees success, but both contain great potential. For art, in this case sculpture, there are two moments that concentrate this potential – the moment of creation and the moment of perception. Art in a closet is not art; society without art is a closet. Caro Enrico, the way we take art out of the closet changes the way we see the world. Our work, the 'glue' we talk about, is in its purest sense political. It is about asking questions which get down to the roots, then turning the questions upside down in order to gain a new understanding of the problem... and then conceiving a solution. Together, while cruising through the French countryside or late at night, we have often set out to find new ways of making "actions artistiques" happen – working to bring art to perception. We look to other places than museums... for better ways of communicating, informing and documenting the meeting of art and the community. I wonder if this isn't the moment to launch the debate on the role of the "catalog" in this – and now what?
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Many things are left out or lost or hidden in a catalog. Do others see the spirit of the place when they see these photographs? In some sense it seems that the art is the most impersonal part of the park - the least connected to what it is about. It seems on the surface as if the art could be put anywhere and very often places where art occurs are like that.

In our interactions with other agencies we frequently meet with the desire that we be impersonal - that the more removed from the messiness of real life the more acceptable we are (and the more likely that we will receive funding). We think the art should have some connection to the park. Very often it seems that the more removed the selection process is the more legitimate it will be - that the more we conform to an external set of standards the better chance we have to survive.

But, the thing about the park is that it is very human. It is a direct expression of the people who are involved with it. And like humans it has its strengths and weaknesses and very rarely does it conform to one’s expectations.

One of the successes of this catalog is that it is a very personal expression of the people who made it. The photographer, Dominique Evard, and the designer, Pippo Lionni, are both artists in their own right. What they are presenting is a personal and biased record of the park. They are making their own aesthetic decisions about what should be included and how it should be presented. By making the record “art” we attempt to dispense with the demon objectivity. We believe that it is through personal expression - through art - that the spirit and truth of a place is revealed.

So, what has it done? What has Socrates done? Given the opportunity to 95 artists to make and exhibit 102 works of art. Spent $600,000, borrowing, begging $1 to $20,000, in clearing garbage, employing people, moving dirt, making sculpture. Sculpture - wood, stone, steel, laser, neon on land, sea and air. Installations, gallery shows, murals, music, dance, theater. Performance art.


Mostly we press our face into the dirt. Mostly we are too close to say what we are doing in any sort of larger scheme of things. We work day to day. We try to balance questions like “How do we judge what is good art?” against “What will work out there?” Meaning and value versus durability and suitability. Over the past few years, we have learned to recognize the practical and can articulate it. Mostly, we can recognize what is appropriate for the site and have learned not to undervalue that sort of judgement in the realm of public art. We become less articulate when we enter into the realm of meaning and value with respect to the art that is chosen for the park or the project itself. Rapidly we touch belief: what we believe is good, what we believe we are doing there. Why we should remain. Difficult to quantify or articulate. We believe we are beneficial to the neighborhood. We believe that the transformation from a garbage dump that people were afraid to walk past into a park is a good thing. That grass and trees and flowers are good and that art is good. Art expresses an alternative and we believe that it is important to be reminded that different kinds of existences and expressions are possible. We believe that access to the waterfront should be preserved. We believe that an organization does not have to conform to the norm to be viable. We have all seen and lived with the unemployment, racism, crack, theft, rape and murder that surround us. We believe that the violence around us needs to be stopped and that anything that helps that fight is important; and, we believe that we must all work together to make this happen.

Ivana M. Mestrovic.