Under the auspices of the Athena Foundation, the Socrates Sculpture Park has been created as a public gathering place for the exhibition of work by contemporary American sculptors. The 4.5 acre site along the East River in Long Island City, leased from the City of New York, is the only public space within the metropolitan area specifically devoted to exhibiting large-scale outdoor sculpture.

The Athena Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation registered with the State of New York. The Foundation was established in 1977 to encourage the arts by providing support to artists in the form of grants, materials, exhibition and work space.

This catalogue has been published as a document of the CCNY Architecture Project, Fall 1986, at the Socrates Sculpture Park.

Copyright © The Athena Foundation Inc.
PO Box 6259, Long Island City
NY 11106. All rights reserved.
Editor: Lida Lopez
Design/Production: Skeeth/Mock Studios
Photography: David Tomono
The assignment was a flexible one: relate the sculpture to its urban surroundings, taking into consideration the many elements present, from the river with its breathtaking view of Manhattan, to the factories and residential buildings bordering the plot of land.

The priority item was the sculpture and how best to exhibit it within that space. With this in mind, it was interesting to see that the class split into two camps—those who proposed that the site remain more or less seceded from urban, untouched; and those who envisioned a garden, set apart, walled-off from the industrial landscape at its borders and focused on the view and the water's bounty.

The drama of the site, coupled with its location in an area in need of rehabilitation, was an engaging problem. Adding to it a third dimension, that of fine art, the landscape architecture project moved technically and philosophically to another plane, and into the service of another creative discipline. The intellectual ideal, urban landscaping used to display sculptural art, had a purity which allowed many approaches, and it was the clarity of that issue which sparked the creative participation of each member of the class, not only individually, but in a commune system as well.

The Socrates Sculpture Park, dedicated to the expansion of the human spirit and the creative linking of art and community, invited the CCNY landscape design class to propose solutions for the developing park.

Under the brilliant direction of Paul Friedberg, a world-renowned landscape architect, the students responded with enthusiasm and humanness variety.

We have arrived at an educational/artistic collaboration in which ALL parties are winners.

It is this type of educational experience which the innovative energy of the Socrates Sculpture Park creates. From children working with artist Richard Mock on his exuberant mural on this site, to the CCNY students and their highly original designs for the park, the brightness of our imagination is increased. May it bring health and joy to our society.
"I decided to focus on privacy so that the viewer could commune with the sculpture. Each piece of art to have a fair shake, despite its size or position. COMMUNICATION

It was important that each object receive equal time, and I achieved this through a series of sunken plazas, which served as punctuations in the grid of the park."
It was my goal to create an island separate from its industrial surroundings. The park to be a special place, a retreat for intellectual thought and contemplation, integrated with the water and Manhattan skyline. By using a vertical screen of trees as well as other elements, I made the park a distinct artistic site contrasting with its location.
My first impression was that there should be no paths – people should be allowed to roam freely through the park. I felt the sculpture should make its statement without dominating the site. A natural flow of movement would have people being incidentally introduced to the art as they strolled, paused and reflected.
"I planned to create order out of the disorder that existed in the park, but I didn't seek permanence. There was an ephemeral quality I was after, TRANSITIONAL, an unfinished look which would, as the park was modified or reconstructed to suit the sculptural exhibitions, lend itself more readily to change."
From my design point of view, I thought the space should be experienced as a whole. People should come to see not only the sculpture, but they would come to talk about the blue of the water, the green of the trees, the tall buildings across the river as well. People and elements would interact to make a living, active park in the neighborhood.

I tried not to isolate the garden from its environment. On the opposite, I tried to use it as a bridge between NATURE and the community. The creation of visual openings to the fence, the proposed pathway leading us through, the amphitheater at a higher ground... All is inviting and welcomes the public to share the experience and contemplate the beauty of a piece of sculpture framed by the immensity of the ocean, the splendor of the sky and the green of the trees.
The site is an urban wild, reflecting its genesis as industrial landfill and its reclamation by nature. River shore vegetation and gently tilting interaction planes provide screened and open views of sculpture, city and community. Sweeping curves create hollows and promontories, giving variety to sculpture sites and to movement through the park.
I felt that each artist confronted with the wide-open site would have a great sense of freedom which I did not propose to limit. An artist could have fun with the terrain, play off the urban quality of the area if so desired. The triple experience of natural, urban and artistic environment would offer more ideas, more opportunities for art.
Noise, or rather the omission of it, was a big factor for me. I expected to keep the site more or less the way it was, but with a gradual slope. **Q.U.I.E.T.N.E.S.S.**

Trees would be added to make the space moodier, more contemplative, allowing for encounters with the sculpture, but still open to the view of the Manhattan skyline.
Some of the sculptures were difficult to see; certain nearby structures were distracting and should have been screened. The site had much to offer, and I proposed to enhance the good qualities so that the screening sculpture would succeed. I felt they would be more expressive in a clean space. Comfort was important, too: people should be able to enjoy the space as well as the sculpture.
The transition from land to water was the important feature. My concept was to guide people through a small space, then lead them through a narrow gateway area to an open view at the water. There was to be a background suitable for each work of art, thus enabling the different scale of each piece of sculpture to be shown to its best advantage.
TEN SOLUTIONS
JURORS’ STATEMENT

Rather than choose one single proposal from the ten solutions offered by these students, the jury and the Foundation, finding merit in portions of each design, recognize that the park will evolve from a common forum drawn from the range of approaches given forth here, as well as contributions and proposals from the community-at-large, involved artists and other elements which, when incorporated, will produce a truly public space.

ART KLEINMAN  •  ENRICO MARTIGNONI  •  IRENE MCMANUS  •  STEVE WHITEHEAD
DEDICATED TO SOCRADES IN HIS SEARCH FOR TRUTH.