

In the Future: The Necessary Deployment of Public Space in the Museum

Here, in a few words—for the last day of *Flamme éternelle* (*Eternal Flame*)—I will attempt to sketch out an idea, a vision, a postulate on the basis of the experience of *Flamme éternelle*, and I want to share here something I was confronted with in the last fifty-two days: the necessity of the deployment of *public space* in the museum and in the public institution. The assertion of *Flamme éternelle* has been the creation—by presence and production and by being admission-free and nonprogrammable—of a public space, or moments of public space, within an institution. This proves to be necessary, for in more and more of our streets, cities, and neighborhoods, public space is shrinking. There are fewer and fewer public spaces, and hence the question of the extension or redeployment of public space in the museum and in the public institution is the question to be posed from here on.

My experience with work in public space and with the notion of public space—I have produced sixty-six works of public space to this point, eight of which followed the guidelines of “Presence and Production”—shows me that it is possible to touch—that is to say, to create—a *nonexclusive public* and to do so within the institution, even if—for certain—in proportions that differ according to the location of the work, whether it be a neighborhood in the periphery or a museum at the center of the city. This nonexclusive public for me always constitutes the essential public, the public to conquer and reconquer. This nonexclusive public is definitely the hard core of projects conceived within the guidelines of “Presence and Production.” The nonexclusive public, the heart (hard core) of this genre of work, is an *open public* (“open” because it is open to an experience) and is composed essentially of people who have free time, who are young or who are at the margins of society, who participate by giving their presence and their production for their own reasons, which remain and must remain unknown.

The open public—logically—constitutes also the heart of the project *Flamme éternelle*, and this open public, as I have experienced, makes the field of nonsatisfaction possible. The open public has understood—within and together with *Flamme éternelle*—that it’s not about just any satisfaction or about immediate satisfaction. It has understood first and experienced first—because “receptiveness” is its specificity—the fact that nonprogramming is the novelty, the future, the key dimension of the future. The open public has understood that one has to support, to agree with, even wish for this nonsatisfaction, which derives from nonprogramming. The open public understands that it’s by the state of nonsatisfaction that it participates in the creation of an event. And above all, the open public has understood—and is ready to experience—that an event without transformation is not an event. It knows that transformation doesn’t take place unless nonsatisfaction is experienced as “resistance,” which is itself “transformation.” Because nonsatisfaction is a tool for resisting cultural, economic, political, religious, and social habits. The open public knows that *art is resistance*, resistance as such. The open public with this resistance renders transformation possible.

I think that the dimension of *nonsatisfaction* allows the sketching of a new dynamic, a dynamic or a movement in which a new form of public space is created or deployed—or if you will, redeployed.

The museum can become—in the future—a place where the transformation of an event is possible. This novel idea and this new postulate of a transformative event within the institution will become possible by *presence* and by *production*. Such a museum will be open at all times, at all hours (24/7), without a single closing day, and will be *free* for all. It will be a museum where public space is used, thus becoming a *living museum*, a real *living space*.

—Thomas Hirschhorn, June 2014