

**Gregg M. Horowitz**  
*Public Art/Public Space:*  
*The Spectacle of the*  
*Tilted Arc Controversy*

On the night of March 15, 1989, after a battle that lasted, not coincidentally, almost exactly as long as the Reagan presidency, Richard Serra's sculpture *Tilted Arc* was removed from Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan.<sup>1</sup> Because *Tilted Arc* was designed specifically for, and so in part derived its identity from, its site, its expulsion from Federal Plaza was at the same time its destruction. The agent of *Tilted Arc*'s demolition, the General Services Administration (GSA), was also the agent of its installation. The GSA is the federal agency responsible for the construction and maintenance of United States government property. Part of its mandate, the Art-in-Architecture program (AIA), is to devote one-half of one percent of the cost of the construction or repair of federal property to the funding of public art. After a standard procedure of proposal and review, *Tilted Arc* was installed in 1981. A few objections were raised immediately, but since expressions of displeasure are typical at first when any public art is installed, nothing came of them. However, in 1984, William Diamond, the Reagan appointee as GSA New York Regional Administrator, began to take an interest in the matter and provided a legitimating platform for the opponents of the sculpture. Diamond himself, despite having already spoken out against the work, convened a hearing at which the issue of *Tilted Arc*'s removal was aired publicly; 58 people testified in favor of removal, 122 against.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the panel voted four to one for eviction. Serra fought the GSA in the courts until 1989, at which point, his appeals exhausted, the GSA was permitted to destroy *Tilted Arc*.

While *Tilted Arc* was by its nature a public spectacle, so too was the making of the decision about its fate. Serra's substantial reputation warranted coverage both by the general and the art media, and further attention was garnered by the oddity of the federal government pressing for a work of art to be destroyed. Ultimately, however, the essentially public nature of the dispute was guaranteed by Diamond's insistence on a public decision-making process. It was a quasi-

democratic procedure at best, since Diamond ignored the "polling" he himself initiated, but it was nevertheless a staged performance of democratic public deliberation over the fate of a work of public art. Much ink was spilled and many voices raised because the battle was propelled by the GSA into public scrutiny, and it is the public discourse about the fate of public space—specifically, the discourse of the protection of public space from public art—that is my central focus here.

Since so much has already been said about *Tilted Arc*, another analysis may not seem necessary. Nonetheless, in the years since the sculpture's destruction, events have occurred and trends have solidified which allow us to see more clearly what was at stake in getting rid of it. The battle over *Tilted Arc* was not simply a fight over a public artwork. It was also a piece of the struggle over the fate of public space in the American city, over its existence, the legitimation of claims upon it, and the role of art and aesthetic experience in opening up or closing down reflection on these issues. In addition, it was also an early version of the strategy of censorship-as-liberation used by regressive political forces in other antidemocratic projects. It is in light of these larger concerns that the public spectacle of the debate over *Tilted Arc* may be seen to be as significant as the spectacle of the sculpture itself. In a controversy in which public art was pitted against public space, with the federal government depicting itself as the defender of public space, we can see how the destiny of the very idea of public space and of certain forms of democratic political practice was being contested and also how opposition to critical art came to be a cover for antidemocratic tendencies.

Before beginning my discussion; let me stress again that my aim is to analyze the then-current opposition to *Tilted Arc* in order to reveal how it functioned or was made to function as part of a specific sociopolitical tendency (and a tendency which, once made explicit, might, in fact, not be endorsed by any particular opponent). Of course, establishing this point could not support, nor is it intended to support, the claims to permanency offered on behalf of *Tilted Arc* by Serra or his allies. As Michael Kelly argues elsewhere in this symposium, the arguments for those claims might well be defective. I will remain silent re-

garding that issue (although the silence ought not to be construed as backhanded derogation of those claims, either).

It follows from my self-imposed limits that I do not rule out the possibility of arguments in favor of the destruction of *Tilted Arc* other than those analyzed here. In a less charged and contentious context, more subtle arguments about the relation between public art and urban public space might have been brought to bear; indeed, my analysis is offered in the hope of bringing to the surface some of the issues such arguments would have to confront. However, that the considerations I offer were not addressed is a constitutive feature of the spectacle of deciding *Tilted Arc*'s fate. The hearings convened by Diamond served to suppress the underlying issue of the disposition of public space, and it is along the tracks of that suppression that my discussion runs. Hence, although other arguments against *Tilted Arc*'s permanency are possible, unless they were to address the construction of the idea of "the public" used against the sculpture, they would remain irrelevant to my concerns here.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps one final word is required in defense of returning to this case. After all, since *Tilted Arc* is a thing of the past, why dredge up old hurts yet again? Might not living in the distant past of the 1980s open us to the charge of a certain lugubrious fascination with dead issues? However, aside from the fact that similar cases continue to arise and that 1989, the year of *Tilted Arc*'s destruction, is really not so very long ago, the desire to move on to new cases which do not raise a ruckus is, I suggest, inappropriate. We should not treat the successful opposition to *Tilted Arc* as irrelevant to the relatively uncontroversial operation of some later AIA or percent-for-art programs; to do so would be to think as if the criteria for "successful" public art have developed innocently of the threat forged as the idea of "the public" in the Serra case. The papers in this symposium by Kelly and by Hilde Hein address the implications of this case for other instances of public art; nonetheless, if my analysis of the tone and nature of the opposition to *Tilted Arc* is correct, then any discussion of public art which does not wrestle with the issues raised by this case runs the risk of unconscious complicity with the enemies of democratic public space. In short, turning away from the Serra controversy, either in weariness

or in an effort to be rigorously up-to-date, would be forward-looking only if a vision of the future of public art depends, as I think it does not, on turning a blind eye even to the recent past. Compliance with the imperative of progress is philosophically unbecoming when that imperative demands the public sacrifice of criticism in the name of reconciliation.

Diamond held his public hearings March 6–8, 1985. Three kinds of objections were raised: 1) *Tilted Arc* was an improper symbol of the functions housed in the courthouse, in the adjacent Jacob Javits Federal Building, and in the plaza itself; 2) the sculpture destroyed the original beauty of the plaza; and 3) it prevented the plaza from being used for other purposes. On the basis of these objections, the complainants entreated the government to remove *Tilted Arc* from their sight.<sup>4</sup>

I will begin with the objection that *Tilted Arc* was an improper symbol. In a November 1984 letter, Judge Edward Re of the United States Court of International Trade said that "this rusted steel barrier" undermines the goals of "provid[ing] proper identification for the Courthouse" and "generat[ing] respect for its symbol of justice" (p. 28). This political objection was seconded by Congressman Ted Weiss when he described the goal of AIA as "seeking to enhance the image of America through its government buildings by placing distinctive works of contemporary American art in public view" (p. 112). At first this objection seems much like the one that led to the erection of a realistic statue in the precinct established by Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, and perhaps this was what Re had in mind. As the Vietnam Veterans Memorial example demonstrates, the taste for affirmative symbols of grandeur grows in direct proportion to insecurity about the grandeur itself. And for Judge Re, an executive of the very justice he wanted to see respected in statuary, an affirmation of the glory of American justice might well also be a self-affirmation.

However, the second part of Weiss's gloss suggests a deeper and, in fact, more widely shared objection, that *Tilted Arc* was an improper symbol not of justice but of the beneficence of the federal government in providing something like amenities for the public. This objection, it should be noted, is different from another which I will consider, that *Tilted Arc*, in

fact, fails to be an amenity or prevents the use of the plaza as an amenity. The issue Weiss raised has to do not with the usefulness of works of art but rather with their symbolism, a distinction that can be obscured too easily when what is being symbolized is the benevolent paternalism of providing objects for use. In this light, we might see the symbolic objection as directed at *Tilted Arc*'s obscuring of the liberal intentions of AIA itself.

The most revealing expression of the symbolic objection came in the decision handed down by Dwight Ink, Acting Administrator of the GSA, to remove *Tilted Arc*. In his summary, Ink observed that "those testifying in favor of relocation regarded the Plaza and the open space it symbolized much more highly than did those who favored retention" (p. 156). Notice the odd phrasing: not "the open space the plaza is" but "the open space it symbolized." At one level a plaza is by definition an open space in the sense that it has no enclosing structure on it. However, what Ink reveals here is that the plaza is not just an open space but is also a symbol of openness, of a freedom of movement provided by a benefactor. The openness of Federal Plaza is supposed to stand at the symbolic level for the real thing, real open space, and so for a kind of democratic accessibility. This symbolic displacement is especially important, since in a deeper sense of open, it is precisely open space that is tententially absent from the postmodern city.

It is useful to consider how the plaza-as-symbol played a role in several fantasies about public life. Joseph Liebman, who worked in Federal Plaza, testified at the hearing in favor of removal by speaking not of what the plaza was before the arc was installed but rather of what it might have been. He needs to be quoted at length because of the stark intertwining in his remarks of fantasy and reality characteristic of attendance on the symbol.

I have worked at 26 Federal Plaza since 1969. While the plaza never fulfilled all my expectations, at least until 1980, I regarded it as a relaxing reflective space where I could walk, sit, and contemplate in an unhurried manner. Every now and then, rays of sunshine bathed the plaza, creating new vistas and moods for its vibrant and unchallenged space.

I remember those moments: I remember the cool spray of the fountain misting the hot air; I remember

the band concerts; I remember the musical sounds of neighborhood children playing on the plaza, while their mothers, sheltered under the courthouse, rocked baby carriages, still minding their children at play. I remember walking freely in the plaza, contemplating the examination of a witness, undisturbed by the presence of other people engaged in conversation or young lovers holding hands. I also remember my dreams of additional seating areas, of more cultural events, temporary outdoor exhibits of sculptures and paintings, ethnic dance festivals and children's shows. (p. 111)

When we consider that in the seventeen years of the plaza's existence prior to *Tilted Arc* there were fewer than twenty public events, that other than the steps into the buildings there was no public seating except, of course, for the lip of the fountain because the fountain was usually dry, that the plaza is a notoriously windy site, we can see that Liebman's dream was blocked not by the sculpture but by the space itself. Liebman envisioned a festive, multiuse space which never existed, but for its nonexistence he blames the arc. Immediately following his list of what he calls dreams, he says, "All of those things are just memories now, ending with the installation of the *Tilted Arc*" (pp. 111–112). This was a typical response: the arc itself became a focal point not as a disturbance in public space but as a disturbance in the transparency of the plaza's symbolic effect.

Norman Steinlauf, another worker in the complex, made a similar point. Public art is an excellent idea, he said, because art transports us, if only for a moment, into a realm of personal meaning, but *Tilted Arc* "represent[s] an irritant and an impediment" (pp. 109–110). We should take Steinlauf's and Liebman's attention to representation literally, for it is closely attuned to the symbolic function of the plaza as a substitute for real public space, a function disturbed at the level of the symbol by the arc. *Tilted Arc* is not the cause of the deathliness of Federal Plaza, nor is it itself an impediment—instead, it prevents viewers of it from using the plaza merely to imagine the existence of an alternative public space. That *Tilted Arc* deprived people of the privilege of their illusions is, I believe, the reason it became a focus of dispute.

That Federal Plaza became the focus of fantasies about public space after the installation of

*Tilted Arc* can also be seen in the second objection, that the sculpture destroyed some specific and concrete beautiful aspect of the plaza. While there might be a reasonable version of this objection which first identifies some such aspect and then demonstrates how *Tilted Arc* negated or attenuated it, it seems unimaginable that such an argument could be developed for this site (although, as I will show, whether there is a reasonable version is, in any case, irrelevant to the functioning of this objection). Federal Plaza is one of the ugliest projects in lower Manhattan, a final excrescence of the design standards characteristic of the federally funded urban renewal projects which destroyed several downtowns while trying to revalorize them economically. The ugliness of the complex is doubly determined. First, it has all the features of the degenerate utopianism of urban renewal; it is a set of building-machines, an efficiently organized office complex, plunked down in the middle of a mockery of a streetscape as if visible devotion to productivity at the office were in itself a human good. Federal Plaza, in other words, looks like government-corporate power in barely aestheticized form. Second, Federal Plaza was a late urban renewal project. It was completed in 1968, that fateful year when the combination of urban insurrection and student and labor unrest on the one hand and the expenses of overseas American adventurism on the other were leading toward reevaluations of the entire idea of federal urban "renewal." As the goal of the beautiful open city receded from view, so too did the money required for achieving it, and the ugly incompleteness of Federal Plaza is a result. Indeed, no public art was installed until 1981 precisely because no funds were available as construction was finished in 1968. Even if Federal Plaza had had the possibility of being beautiful, the commitment to making it so had vanished by the time it was built.

It is in light of the failure to beautify Federal Plaza that we can best grasp the insistent fantasies about its beauty. The plaza was held to be beautiful not because it is but because it had to be. As with so many of the urban revitalization projects of the 1950s and 1960s, unless there were spaces where the workers could sit during lunch hour to imagine release and relief, the brutality of the complexes would be overwhelmingly manifest. The open space was intended to

provide the imaginary alternative to the utter routinization of work life, as Steinlauf's comment reveals. In the real absence of such an alternative, the insistence on the right to imagine it intensified. Only in this context can we make any sense at all of Re's objection that *Tilted Arc* "eliminated ... the aesthetic vista of the plaza for thousands of New Yorkers, many of whom toil in windowless offices" (p. 28). Surely the aesthetic vista was eliminated by the lack of windows. However, rather than address the painful reality of the spatial brutalization effected by slotting people into blind office blocks, Re and others displaced what must have been a long-standing grievance onto a sculpture which highlighted the vistalessness of the space it occupied. One can only imagine thousands of New Yorkers sitting in windowless offices imagining not seeing the sculpture that is blocking their now merely aesthetic satisfaction.

At this point the argument seems to have returned to *Tilted Arc*'s primary crime in the eyes of its attackers, that it is an obstacle to imagining the existence of nonexistent public space. However, this return has a twist. The conception of publicity which played such a crucial ideological role in postwar urban renewal underwent a tendential transformation in the 1980s; public space, for many and complex reasons, went from being the civic center of urban life to a zone of danger and threat. The traditional ideal of a space of democratic public encounter evaporated in the movement to the cities of indoor malls, commercial theme parks, and inward-turning multiblock developments. The ideal of public space did not disappear—it just went private and so reappeared in a simulacrum. In a sense, then, the only public space many complainants against the arc wanted was a symbolic one, a space which, in its public nonpublicity, could serve as a comforting reminder of dangers avoided. Thus, one of the objections which hovered around the edges of the complaint that the plaza was rendered less useful by the sculpture is, in its phantasmic exaggeration, at the very heart of the matter. Margo Jacobs, a self-identified horse breeder, begins her testimony by dismissing the question of the aesthetic value of *Tilted Arc* as irrelevant to the issue at hand, since not only does it make the plaza less effective as a public space, it also makes it "possibly a dangerous place to be when a large number of

people congregate at once, as they do in the political demonstrations we have all seen on the seven o'clock news" (p. 124). Jacobs apparently does not take part in the televised demonstrations she watches at home; they are congregations of other people, people who use the space differently from her, people who, when in the plaza in the presence of the arc, constitute not a legitimate public but a danger. The crossing of the political and the public, just that intermingling blocked by the pseudo-public spaces of the 1980s metropolis, is here presented as a threat.

The fantasy of political danger crystallizing around the arc was most paranoiacally detailed by Vickie O'Dougherty, a GSA security specialist, who claimed that *Tilted Arc's* curvature made it a blast wall for explosives. Perhaps so, but notice the remarkable slippage in O'Dougherty's testimony from activism to terrorism, from graffiti to violence, from the arc's possible use by terrorists to its being pro-terrorism:

Now in past experience we have had several explosions on federal property by terrorists, activists. The principles that they used were twofold: they used many times this type of device—a wall or something like that to vent the explosion against the building. ... It would, of course, take a larger bomb than which has been previously used to do this kind of, to destroy enough for their purposes; but it is possible, and lately we are expecting the worst in the federal sector. ... Yes—most people do express their opinions against us in either violent ways or with graffiti and those other types of ways. We are considering right now many, many antiterrorist types of devices to install in the building, but we already have some that exist that are proterrorist. (p. 116)

As in Jacobs's objection, but in a more delirious form, the political use of public space, which is to say its use as public space, is systematically conflated with violence and terror. What is expelled as outside the protected precincts of urban enclosures, what in being expelled becomes alien, here returns already inflated into a danger as such and a danger to "legitimate" use.

A less fantastic dream of symbolic utilization can bring out how *Tilted Arc* could be made such a lightning rod. O'Dougherty and Jacobs express their fears of the urban directly and so

overtly manifest an utter loss of the political desirability of public space, but Paul Goldstein, a representative of Manhattan Community Board #1, exhibits a more subtle symptom of this loss:

This potentially wonderful area, which could easily be brought to life with more trees and benches, a working fountain, and lunchtime entertainment, has instead been turned into a virtual no-man's-land, and it must be recognized that Mr. Serra's sculpture has regrettably contributed to the public's rejection of this space. Many people are even bewildered when they are told that this large metal structure is not a piece of leftover construction material, but is, in fact, a piece of art. Its overwhelming size prevents the free-flowing circulation that the plaza was built to enhance, and in the minds of many the piece constitutes both a safety and a fire hazard. (p. 126)

Goldstein's gentler and more carefully spoken objection acknowledges that Federal Plaza was a dead space even before the arc's installation; it was never useful, had never provided what it promised. His complaint, however, issues in a demand for a space of entertainment, not a public space but a space of private pleasure that happens to be in the middle of the city, and in this sense Goldstein's imagination is bound by the ideological transformation of the city characteristic of the 1980s. Nonetheless, in his barely audible utopian demand we can hear the tattered remains of a striving for alternatives, a signal that the cauterization of desire implicit in the malling of public space was, in 1985, still incomplete and unstable. But in directing this distorted utopian complaint not against the GSA or the general trends of 1980s urbanism but rather against *Tilted Arc*, Goldstein reveals the one legitimate use to which Federal Plaza could still be put, as an occasion to imagine alternatives. Caught between the abandonment of public space it now cannot be and its replacement by a pseudo-public simulacrum, Federal Plaza becomes at most a site of desire and fantasy.

It is the use of Federal Plaza as a site of urban fantasy against which *Tilted Arc* offends. One complaint against the arc was that it interrupted free passage through the plaza. However, prior to the design's approval, Serra did studies requested by the GSA in which he chalked out various sitings to examine whether the arc would interfere with the routine passages from

street to building and discovered that it would not. Furthermore, he left half the plaza open for social functions and gave the non-working fountain a wide berth.<sup>5</sup> *Tilted Arc* did not interfere at all with paths of transit; rather, it appeared to do so, but in the domain of fantasies of easy use that was exactly the problem. Serra did not cause the deadness and unusability of Federal Plaza, but he did make it manifest. As Roberta Smith observed in defending *Tilted Arc*, "It is not wide entertainment and it is not an escape from reality, but it does ask you to examine its own reality, its scale, its material, its tilted sweep, and so the other things around it" (p. 103). This may well be a proper function of a public artwork, to provoke critical reflection and dialogue on the space it occupies,<sup>6</sup> but at a moment when that space is both a sign of the powerlessness of those who pass through it and a focus for distorted fantasies of liberation from potentially unpleasant encounters, the demand for critical reflection is sure to elicit hostility. *Tilted Arc* did not destroy a plaza, but it did, in its aggressive site-specificity, destroy a dream.

The demand for a usable public space expressed in the opposition to *Tilted Arc* was thus really a demand for a symbolic space, a fantasy center of an imaginary city, secured, mall-like, and heavily surveilled. It was this demand, so useful to an urban policy leaning toward privatization, the abandonment of the city to a destiny determined by corporate and financial capital, and the elimination of, precisely, spaces for criticism of that tendency, which was staged as a public outcry. Diamond convened a panel stacked with his own employees, sent out fliers inviting testimony at the supposedly neutral hearing, and so gave a platform to the heretofore random pleading for federal relief. Finally, despite the two-to-one ratio in favor of retaining *Tilted Arc*, Diamond recommended its destruction, defending his decision in a letter to Ink by presenting himself as a protector of the public interest. In a precursor to the surreal presidential campaign of Ross Perot, Diamond built himself a "public" he could then answer to responsibly. As Clara Weyergraf-Serra bitterly asked, "Where is direct democracy used other than to get rid of art?" (p. 88).

In short, the opposition to *Tilted Arc* was not just organized into a movement by a Reagan bureaucrat but was also then staged by him. The

form of the drama was a contest between the public interest, represented by opposition to the arc, and the artworld, between the concern for open space and effete aesthetic concerns; this is a drama we have seen staged with increasing frequency and ferocity in the years since. In this conflict between a people and art, the government presents itself as an impartial mediator attempting to be fair to all and, in its "fairness," it then grants the request of that very public it had constructed for release from the obligation to criticize, in this case, the shape of urban policy. Diamond positioned himself as an ally of this public and, by removing *Tilted Arc*, doing the public the favor of saving it from art. In the process, he also "saved" the public from the critical reflection that would have led to a different, dangerous, more democratic discourse. Diamond's staging of the struggle over *Tilted Arc* forged an ideological alliance between the people and the processes of urban restructuring, between the demos and the tendential elimination of the space of democracy, at a moment when that alliance was necessary but still unsecured. Insofar as it was a critical work of art that was promoted to the status of the common enemy binding this alliance, the staging instantiated a regressive political strategy of censorship-as-liberation with the likes of which we are not yet done.<sup>7</sup>

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1. For helpful commentary and discussion on this essay, I would like to thank Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, Lydia Goehr, Thomas Huhn, Ellen Levy, and the anonymous referees for this journal.

2. These numbers are inherently misleading. Some of those who testified did so as representatives of groups. John Guare and Betty St. Clair, for instance, supported Serra as spokespeople for the Municipal Arts Society and the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, respectively, while Peter Hirsch and Paul Goldstein testified in favor of removal as representatives of the Association of Immigration Attorneys and Manhattan Community Board #1, respectively. Several others who testified invoked their titles and affiliations but noted that they were speaking as private citizens, as if there were some officially sanctioned alterna-

tive way to speak. Hence, the official numbers seem to represent larger constituencies, but they do so opaquely insofar as we do not know how to sum personal, semi-public, and institutional preferences.

3. It is for this reason that I will not discuss the published opposition to *Tilted Arc* of the several commentators and critics whose views, despite the more tempered tone made possible by written presentation, still did not get behind the veil of "the public." Arthur Danto, for example, argued in favor of the destruction of the sculpture in his typically urbane manner but nonetheless assumed just that integrity of the idea and fact of the public I am challenging. "Public art is the public transfigured: it is us," Danto wrote, "in the medium of artistic transformation," from which it follows that Serra's claims for the artistic integrity of *Tilted Arc* must take second place to the claims of the work's subject. This sentiment may be true. However, until we unpack the putatively integral "us" in the name of whom Danto speaks and, in so speaking, constructs as much as reports, it is not a counterargument to the analysis which follows. Arthur Danto, "Tilted Arc and Public Art," in *The State of the Art* (New York: Prentice-Hall Press, 1987), pp. 90–94.

4. The references in this essay are to original testimony and documents collected in *Richard Serra's Tilted Arc*, eds. Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1988). Further citations will be referenced in the text.

5. A number of people testified at the hearing about Serra's having satisfied the concerns of the AIA review panel regarding these issues before *Tilted Arc's* installation. See especially the testimony of Julia Brown, who had been the project manager for the GSA's AIA program, in Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk, eds., *Richard Serra's Tilted Arc*, pp. 83–85. A detailed chronology of the proposal and review process can be found in Sherrill Jordan, project coordinator, *Public Art, Public Controversy: The Tilted Arc on Trial* (New York: ACA Books, 1987), pp. 49–56. It should be noted that Judith Balfe and Margaret Wyszomirski argue

that neither Serra's pole-and-string sitings nor the model of *Tilted Arc* put on display prior to installation gave "an accurate impression of the mass and solidity of the artwork itself." However, if it is granted that such preliminary investigations did ascertain that pedestrian flow was not impeded, then "mass and solidity" here must mean perceived mass and solidity. The perception of mass and solidity, however, does not impede traffic. Balfe and Wyszomirski, "The Commissioning of a Work of Public Art," in Jordan, *Public Art and Public Controversy*, pp. 18–27.

6. Serra writes of site-specificity:

Based on the interdependence of work and site, site-specific works address the content and context of their site critically. A new behavioral and perceptual orientation to a site demands a new critical adjustment to one's experience of the place. Site-specific works primarily engender a dialogue with their surroundings.

See Richard Serra, "Tilted Arc Destroyed," *Art in America* 77, no. 5 (1989): 41.

7. In late 1993, Frank Stella's *The Town-Ho's Story* in the Robert Metcalfe Federal Building in Chicago became the object of protest. A petition complained that the work was commissioned without proper community input despite the fact that the arts panel which approved it included local residents and officials. See "Stella Sculpture Prompts Protest," *Art in America* 81, no. 12 (1993): 27. In 1994, Serra himself resigned a commission by the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco after abusive commentary in the local press and his inability to gain assurances about the permanent siting of the as-yet unnamed sculpture. The attacks in this case began even before Serra had developed detailed proposals or renderings. Whether genuine *public* opposition killed this public artwork will have to be decided by the metaphysicians. See Patricia Failing, "An Unsightly Mess," *ARTnews* 93, no. 8 (1994): 150–153.