THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IMAGINARY:
CONSIDERATIONS OF LOCAL ART PRODUCTION IN
UNCONVENTIONAL SPACES

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines contemporary art projects that are installed in unconventional sites in urban neighbourhoods. Using the conceptual framework of the neighbourhood imaginary, I propose that these local art practices utilize neighbourhood spaces to engage with nation, identity and citizenship practices within the contemporary discourse of globalization. The three art projects I investigate address different aspects of neighbourhood. Cuban artist René Francisco Rodríguez’s (René Francisco) project, *El Patio de Nin*, foregrounds the citizen in an urban neighbourhood. His project merges creativity and pedagogy with social service, and blurs the boundaries between art and life in order to comment on social conditions and citizenship practices. *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* (2006), by Toronto artist Iris Häussler, uses a home in an urban neighbourhood as a physical space in which to create an imaginary life to explore aspects of community, human behaviour and social values. *The Swamp Ward Window*, a Kingston-based curatorial project, takes advantage of the intimacy of the private home and the immediacy of the street to present artworks that explore the interface between public and private and everyday life in the community.

Cornelius Castoriadis argues that the social imaginary emerges when the subconscious, the symbolic and action interact, not merely to reflect the outside world, but to create new meanings from which social change is possible. In my analysis, the neighbourhood imaginary resonates with the social imaginary, functioning as a conceptual laboratory for artists to experiment with the different meanings associated with neighbourhood, community and citizenship. I propose that a reengagement with the local, as part of a
global discourse, provides an opportunity to examine art projects that manifest in
neighbourhoods. And, while taking place in different socio-political circumstances, the
shared condition of locality, I argue, provides a window through which the three projects
envision linkages between aesthetic practices and public life. Finally, in order to
critically consider local artistic practices in relation to globalization and the
commodification of culture, this thesis engages those discourses of globalization that see
culture as integral in new global economies.
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Table of Contents

Abstract............................................................................................................................................ii

Acknowledgements.........................................................................................................................iv

Table of Contents.............................................................................................................................v

List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................vi

Chapter 1 Introduction.....................................................................................................................1
  1.1.1 Overview and Chapter descriptions.......................................................................................1
  1.1.2 Literature Review..................................................................................................................6

Chapter 2 René Francisco Rodríguez: *El Patio de Nin*.................................................................17

Chapter 3 Iris Häussler: *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*...................................................... 46

Chapter 4 Various Artists: *The Swamp Ward Window*...............................................................70

Chapter 5 Conclusion...................................................................................................................... 96

Works Cited....................................................................................................................................102
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>René Francisco, <em>El Patio de Nin</em>, 2003; before project</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>René Francisco, <em>El Patio de Nin</em>, 2003; project in progress</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>René Francisco, <em>El Patio de Nin</em>, 2003; project in progress</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>René Francisco, <em>El Patio de Nin</em>, 2003; completed project</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>René Francisco, <em>El Patio de Nin</em>, 2003; installation of video documentation at Miramar Trade Centre, Havana, Cuba</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Iris Häussler, <em>The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach</em>, front yard at 105 Robinson St., 2006; installation</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Iris Häussler, <em>The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach</em>, back yard at 105 Robinson St., 2006; installation</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Iris Häussler, <em>The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach</em>, living room in 105 Robinson St., 2006; installation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Iris Häussler, <em>The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach</em>, kitchen in 105 Robinson St., 2006; installation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Iris Häussler, <em>The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach</em>, studio/back porch in 105 Robinson St., 2006; installation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Iris Häussler, <em>The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach</em>, cast rabbit skeleton, in 105 Robinson St., 2006; cast concrete</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Iris Häussler, <em>The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach</em>, woman’s bedroom in 105 Robinson St., 2006; installation</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Anne Ramsden, <em>Winter Garden</em>, 2002; plastic flowers. Installation</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Anne Ramsden, <em>Winter Garden</em>, 2002; plastic flowers</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Anne Ramsden, <em>Winter Garden</em>, 2002; plastic flowers (detail)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16</td>
<td>Craig Leonard, <em>for</em>, 2002; installation</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17</td>
<td>Craig Leonard, <em>for</em>, 2002; installation</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 18</td>
<td>Sarindar Dhaliwal, <em>Call the Wind Virago</em>, 2003; installation detail</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 19</td>
<td>Sarindar Dhaliwal, <em>Call the Wind Virago</em>, 2003; Installation detail</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 20</td>
<td>Jan Allen, <em>Neighbourhood Watch</em>, view from street looking into porch, 2004; Installation detail</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 21</td>
<td>Jan Allen, <em>Neighbourhood Watch</em>, view from inside porch looking out, 2004;</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Introduction

Imagination alone enables us …to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that we can see and understand it without bias and prejudice, to bridge abysses of remomeness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair…. Without this kind of imagination, which actually is understanding, we would never be able to take our bearings in the world. It is the only inner compass we have. (Arendt in Hill 1979, 292)

Cities are not just collections of material artefacts; rather, they are also sites through which ideologies are projected, cultural values expressed and power is exercised. (Hall 2006, 3)

The time of public art involves questions of intimacy and immediacy – those transactions when art becomes part of an individual’s life, thoughts and ideas. These moments of connectivity if elusive, imprecise and incalculable, enable people to envision their lives within a community to see and seek some equation between private interest and public good. (Phillips 2003, 131)

1.1.1

Overview and Chapter descriptions

The public spaces of the urban neighbourhood -- the streets, the sidewalks, the parks -- form a network of connectivity in which the private intertwines with public space and the public sphere. Scholarly writing on public space offers a breadth of knowledge that emphasizes the complexity of the vocabulary associated with terms such as public, public sphere and public art. The language used to describe these ideas is variable and tectonic in character, allowing meaning to shift as social, cultural and political conditions change. The art projects I examine in this thesis are all located in neighbourhoods, but
each has been selected for its distinct concept, aesthetic and geography, taking place in
different cities and in different socio-economic conditions, thus emphasizing the force
that historical and cultural determinants have in shaping the meaning and value of public
space.

The quotations above by Hannah Arendt, Tim Hall and Patricia Phillips offer the
beginnings of a discursive architecture for critical examination of local contemporary art
practices that extend beyond the traditional art historical paradigm, into the public spaces
of the neighbourhood. This thesis examines art projects that are installed in
unconventional sites in urban neighbourhoods. Using the conceptual framework of the
neighbourhood imaginary, I propose that these local art practices utilize neighbourhood
spaces to engage with nation, identity and citizenship within the contemporary discourse
of globalization. The neighbourhood imaginary takes its meaning from the concept of the
social imaginary where the imaginary, while not an actual place, represents a system of
meanings that govern a given structure. Philosopher and psychoanalyst Cornelius
Castoriadis argues that the social imaginary emerges when the subconscious, the
symbolic and action interact, not merely to reflect the outside world, but to create new
meanings from which social change is possible (Elliott 2002). The neighbourhood
imaginary resonates with the social imaginary, becoming a conceptual laboratory for
artists to experiment with the different meanings associated with neighbourhood in order
to critically consider the limits and possibilities of community and citizenship.

The three art projects I investigate address different aspects of neighbourhood. René
Francisco Rodriguez’s (René Francisco) project, *El Patio de Nin*, foregrounds the
citizen in an urban neighbourhood, in a particular socio-political context. His projects merge creativity and pedagogy with social service, and blur the boundaries between art and life in order to comment on social conditions and citizenship practices. The documentation of the project, in video and paintings, circulates globally through international art events, bringing other imaginaries into a global arena. Iris Häussler’s *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* uses a home in an urban neighbourhood as a physical space in which to create an imaginary life to explore aspects of community that relate to human behaviour and social values. *The Swamp Ward Window* is a space that takes advantage of the intimacy of the private home and the immediacy of the street to present artworks that explore the interface between public and private and everyday life in the community. Clearly there will be overlaps between the projects; however, each project is driven by different conceptual questions.

The artworks I focus on in the thesis are forms of artistic engagement that emerge out of temporary public art practices that came about in the post-Fordist era (from the 1960s onward). During this period public art expanded from monument -- art sited in public space -- to art that intervened in or addressed public space, and was informed by the social, symbolic, political or physical aspects of the site (Deutsche 1992). The first project discussed here, *El Patio de Nin* (The Garden of Nin) (2005), by Cuban artist René Francisco, is one of a series of works entitled *El Romerillo Trilogy*, which document socially motivated community-based art interventions. The artist offered assistance in the form of manual labour to rebuild homes for residents living in an extremely poor neighbourhood (el Romerillo) in Havana, Cuba. For the project, Francisco spent time in
consultation with neighbourhood residents, knocking on doors in order to determine who members of the community felt were their neighbours most in need, the most isolated from society, or who had not, in their opinion, received what they deserved (Francisco 2006). Having identified Nin Ochoa as one of these individuals, he tells her story through a documentary video that was projected for residents on a large outdoor screen in the neighbourhood and through a series of paintings. The artwork that came out of these civic-minded acts enabled the artist to raise awareness and funds for the projects through arts organizations in the international art community. Francisco launched *El Patio de Nin* into the international art arena at the 9th Havana Biennial in 2006, and again at the Venice Biennale in 2007.

The second project, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* (2006), is by Toronto artist Iris Häussler. In her exploration of the real and the imagined, and the insider and the outsider, Häussler produces installations based on fictional narratives she creates of imaginary private lives. *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* chronicled the imaginary life of a German immigrant and was installed in a house in a residential urban neighbourhood over a six-month period in 2006. The artwork consisted of the house and contents of the residence at 105 Robinson Street, Toronto, Ontario. Häussler “uncovered” the life of Wagenbach by imagining in exhaustive detail the psychology of a man whose life story was shaped by both the place and the space of this particular neighbourhood. Through a fictionalization of Wagenbach’s life, the work challenges art-world systems that determine how we look at art and assess its value. It also examines how we assign value in a broader sense, in relation to community.
The final project, *The Swamp Ward Window*, forms a part of my curatorial practice in which I provide a public venue and curate temporary site-related art installations. The venue is located in the front porch of my home on a busy section of a residential street in Kingston, Ontario, three blocks north of the main street, three blocks from a number of small parks, and two doors from a family run corner store, which functions as hub for residents to chat over morning coffee. The location provides a regular stream of pedestrian traffic to and from the downtown core and a diverse social mix that makes interaction with a broader public possible. While there is a history of publicly engaged art in the Kingston area (see Chapter four for discussion), *The Swamp Ward Window* is the only ongoing project that intervenes directly in the streetscape of an urban neighbourhood to present temporary projects that engage with the site. As well, because my thesis focuses on local forms of artistic engagement in unconventional spaces, and because I wanted to situate the thesis in my local community, *The Swamp Ward Window* is a particularly relevant project to analyze. Finally, because it is part of my curatorial practice, the thesis offers an opportunity to theorize and critically assess *The Swamp Ward Window* in relation to other neighbourhood art projects.

Forrest (2003) suggests that there is a shift in the way people interact and socialize in the era of globalization and, as a result, there is a renewed interest in neighbourhood in western academic discourse. A reengagement with the local as part of a global discourse provides an opportunity to examine art projects that manifest in different local neighbourhoods. As well, it establishes a context for a neighbourhood imaginary, where artistic expression makes possible new ways of thinking about
community and citizenship in a global society. As Yúdice (2003) suggests, the turn to culture as a resource in global economies has made artists the new “workers” in a system where artists-as-producers play a central role in sustaining economies through cultural tourism. Cultural institutions and mega-managed events such as *inSite* (see Chapter three for discussion of *inSite*) and biennials operate as new systems for cultural production and distribution that feed the cultural tourism economy. In this way, he argues, artists are complicit even though they may be able, through their aesthetic practices, to use these new systems and expediencies to facilitate change. The art projects in the following chapters are examined within this context, focusing on the limits and possibilities for artistic forms of expression to raise questions and encourage reflection on community.

1.1.2 Literature Review

There is a substantial number of scholarly works that provide comprehensive analyses of public art practices since the 1960s, including Arlene Raven’s *Art in the Public Interest* (1989) and J.W.T. Mitchell’s *Art and the Public Sphere* (1990). Artist and writer Suzanne Lacy’s *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995), is a compendium of essays on the historical origins of socially responsive and responsible art practices from the 1960s through the mid-1990s. It reveals the complexities of new genre public art practices by examining their interdisciplinary character that combines performance, installation, social and political history and urban planning. A valuable resource for the study of cultural practices that create social change as an alternative to market driven, commodity-based art, Nina Felshin’s, *But is it Art?* (1995) provides in-
depth analyses of forms of dialogic art and of artists working at the intersection of art and activism in public sites and with community participation from the 1970s through 1990s. More recently, art historian Miwon Kwon’s book, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002) provides a critical analysis of site-specificity as public art practice since the 1960s, and examines the relationship of art to location and identity in late capitalism. Cultural theorist Grant H. Kester, in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004), gives an analysis of socially-engaged dialogical art practices and provides a critical frame within which to consider these forms of artistic engagement and how they engage with “public” audiences. Malcolm Miles’s *Art Space and The City* (1997) covers a similar period of art history, but with a focus on urbanism and urban environments. On the subject of Cuban art, Luis Camnitzer’s, *The New Art of Cuba* (1994), Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda’s essay in *While Cuba Waits: Art from the 90’s* (1999), and Eugenio Valdés Figueroa’s study in *Art Cuba: the new generation* (2004) present thorough critical analyses of contemporary Cuban art practices since the 1960s. This literature provides the critical context in which to examine the artworks in the following chapters. All of these works are concerned primarily with the art object, thus limiting their usefulness for my analysis of the way neighbourhoods produce specific experience and socio-cultural meanings within a broader context of globalization. The interdisciplinary nature of my approach in analyzing these artworks suggests a need to build on this body of literature and include work by scholars in the areas of sociology, urban and cultural geography, cultural theory and political thought. This material, in conjunction with the work of art historians such as Rosalyn Deutsche
(1992) and Patricia Phillips (1992, 1995, 1999), who have produced substantial critical writing on public art, provide the foundation upon which I structure my analysis.

Because the projects under examination in this thesis take place in specific neighbourhoods in different cities and different socio-economic conditions, the conceptual framework of the neighbourhood imaginary is used to situate the work locally in a geographically defined place and in a discursive space. In my analysis, “neighbourhood” is used as a fluid concept that coexists with “community”. Geographer Ray Forrest (2003) makes the argument that the relationship between neighbourhood and community is under ongoing contestation and is at times ambiguous. It is this ambiguity that allows for multiple meanings. In delineating between neighbourhood and community, David Byrne in Forrest (2003) describes a neighbourhood as the area where people live and experience the same things, whereas communities are places where people are conscious of a communality derived from common spatial experience and, therefore, act communally. As well, in contemporary society, the neighbourhood takes on new dimensions based on new patterns of socialization (Forrest 2003). Forrest applies Jonathan Urry’s concept of a “mobile” sociology to conceptualize these new patterns of interaction in neighbourhoods, where “central concepts such as fluids, scapes, flows and complexity accommodate diverse mobilities of people, objects, images and information” (Forrest 2003, 1). He discusses neighbourhood in four different contexts: as community, commodity, consumption niche and context. He argues that while there is a longstanding debate surrounding the relationship between neighbourhood and community, in contemporary society the neighbourhood is a fluid formation and should shift according
to questions posed in research. Arguably, communities coexist with neighbourhoods and, therefore, are not limited by physical boundaries. These crossover-points between them makes the interchangeability of the terminology possible so that neighbourhood blends physically-bounded places, determined by political factors with socially-constructed communities of local and extra-local associations.

In an effort to consider some of the conceptual ground for analyses such as that surveyed by Forrest, I draw primarily on the work of political philosopher Hannah Arendt. Importantly, her work builds linkages between aesthetic practices and the public domain. In addition to Arendt’s work, I also consider the work of other political and cultural theorists who have contributed to the discourse on the public sphere, among them Jürgen Habermas’s *The Public Sphere* (1991), Bruce Robbins’s *The Phantom Public Sphere* (1993), Nancy Fraser’s “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy” (1993), and Malcolm Miles’s “Reclaiming the Public Sphere” (2006). While I utilize these theorists at various points throughout the thesis, I engage primarily with Arendt because her work enables one to discuss liminal or interstitial spaces and practices. Habermas’s public sphere, on the other hand, is largely institutional and thus cannot capture the complex identities and spaces of a local/global dynamic such as exists in the art projects under analysis here. Fraser’s work, as well, is primarily a critique of Habermas’s public sphere as a form of hegemonic domination, brought about through exclusions based on gender, race and class (Fraser 1993). Miles however, provides
further elaborations on Arendt’s ideas in relation to urban planning that are helpful in my analysis particularly with respect to *The Swamp Ward Window*.

Arendt suggests that, from the public sphere, the discourse of community emerges. She describes the public sphere in relation to community as not simply place-bound, in that it references both the physical place and metaphysical space of public and private encounters. It is in the “spaces of appearance,” where public and private interests intersect, that people come to know themselves and others in their plurality (McGowan 1998, Arendt 1958). John McGowan, in *Hannah Arendt: An Introduction* (1998), discusses Arendt’s ideas on modernity and argues that her critique of modernity is an over-simplification and that her return to the Greeks and Romans in her analysis for a better public runs the risk of nostalgia and rigidity in present day analysis of the political and private spheres. What is useful in my discussion is his suggestion that her political theory is a heuristic device, a philosophical tool through which we can assess and analyze the world we live in. In addition, art historians Patricia Phillips (1992, 1995, 1999) and Rosalyn Deustche (1992) provide helpful insights that build on Arendt’s ideas to form links between public forms of artistic practice and the public domain. For example, Phillips suggests that art that intervenes in the public domain becomes part of the public realm -- where conflict and difference arises -- and is a space people share wherever it occurs. Therefore, she suggests, as does Arendt, that public art is not only a spatial construct, but also a conceptual one, where art engages with the site, the social dimension, the personal and the collective elements of civic life (Phillips 2004).
To assist my analysis, I make two assumptions. The first is that, despite the pervasiveness of globalization, which has seen an increase in consumption, mobility, borderless communities, homogenization of cities, and a concomitant loss of specificity of place due to phenomena such as tourism and privatization of space, the neighbourhood persists as a local socio-cultural locality. And, as previously mentioned, there is a revival of interest in the neighbourhood as a place where traditions and rootedness, often associated with neighbourhood, produce social identity and meaning. Yet, while the merits of community are arguable, it is important to acknowledge nostalgic impulses that can lead to regressive tendencies when discussing community. Neighbourhoods that propose a sense of belonging and security through, for example, higher standards of living and more cultural amenities, can also result in exclusionary practices. The proliferation of gated communities, and the further gentrification of urban neighbourhoods as advanced by Richard Florida’s (2002) concept of the creative city, marginalize the poor and the homeless, while increased policing of borders in a post 911 world supports anti-cosmopolitanism that feeds cultural and social exclusion. I suggest that the art projects I examine address these perspectives through critical engagement with the concept of neighbourhood. My second assumption is that artists and curators produce work in unconventional spaces such as neighbourhoods because the neighbourhood is an alternative to traditional art spaces; they are in the public domain; they are fluid spaces in which to engage with both an art and non-art public, facilitating dialogue within the specific locality, both as a particular place and as a public space.
I argue that local art practices are important in the context of globalizing factors because the relationship between local and global is a fluid one, where local practices embrace the global in order to leverage opportunities to engage with other imaginaries. In these circumstances, local interactions and familiar markers in the neighbourhood may take on more significance, making the familiar strange and creating means by which to critically understand things like tradition, belonging, rootedness and social hierarchies. And, if the neighbourhood can be leveraged to facilitate community engagement and acts of citizenship, then perhaps the neighbourhood imaginary provides a context for artists to similarly engage. Neighbourhood is shaped by a complex interplay of social, political, technological, cultural and economic factors, and as such it can be articulated in ways that extend beyond national boundaries. For example, Francisco’s project, *El Patio de Nin*, is sited in a neighbourhood in Havana, Cuba, which makes comparative forms of analysis problematic when considered from a western perspective. I argue however, that there are experiences and values that supersede nation and politics and it is through these shared concerns that all three projects in this thesis can be analyzed. The shared condition of locality provides a window through which the three projects utilize unconventional spaces to envision linkages between aesthetic practices and public life.

The local neighbourhood places the art within specific geographical locales, suggesting an association with place that is an important aspect of my discussion. Research by historians, urban geographers, art historians, cultural theorists and sociologists makes available a wealth of interdisciplinary material that is useful in pinpointing intersections between social, cultural and economic experiences of the local
in relation to the global. Lucy Lippard’s *The Lure of the Local* (1997), Doreen Massey’s “A Global Sense of Place” (1994), Sharon Zukin’s “Urban Lifestyles: Diversity and Standardisation in Spaces of Consumption,” as well as her *The Culture of Cities* (1995), Dolores Hayden’s *The Power of Place* (1996), Miwon Kwon’s *One Place After Another: Site-Specificity and Locational Identity* (2002), Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift’s *Cities: Reimagining the Urban* (2002), David Harvey’s *The Urban Experience* (1989), George Yúdice’s *The Expediency of Culture: The Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (2003), and finally Malcolm Miles’s essays “Interruptions: Testing the Rhetoric of Culturally Led Urban Development” (2005) and “After the Public Realm: Spaces of Representation, Transition and Plurality” (2000) have been helpful in developing a diversity of scholarly views on the topic that are applied to varying degrees throughout my analysis. As well, Barbara Jenkins, “Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance” (2005), Jane Jacobs *Dark Age Ahead* (1997), Louis Perez Jr.’s *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* (1999), and Roberto Segri’s *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (1997), provide historical background of the cities under examination. Lippard (1997) and Hayden (1996) provide the underpinnings to discuss place as fundamental to identity and psychological well-being that is useful in grounding the art practices I analyze. The others, because of the broader scope of their approach to the local, provide conceptual apparatuses that I use later to extend my analysis further, to the point at which place intersects with the socio-economic aspects of culture and globalism.

On the subject of place, Hayden suggests that, in the urban landscape, places facilitate the formation of identity through a connection to a place that cultivates personal
and collective public memory (Hayden 1995). Lippard describes place as temporal, spatial, political and personal -- as the “resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar. It is the external world mediated through subjective experience and the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere” (Lippard 1997, 7). And while these scholars provide useful information to consider the ways in which artists draw on local cultural or social histories to ground their work in a specific place, I argue that the connection to place is not the only way the works produce meaning. I suggest that The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach, El Patio de Nin and The Swamp Ward Window projects resonate more broadly by using the conceptual space of the neighbourhood to extend the limits of the local into a global arena.

To facilitate further inquiry along these lines, I turn to previously mentioned scholars, who propose economic and cultural correspondences between localism and globalism. Many of these scholars claim that a progression towards increased capital accumulation and privatization, which is a function of neo-liberal strategies of late capitalism, results in a homogenization of cities, absorbs distinctions of place, and subsumes or marginalizes public space. Harvey argues that these strategies of economic control make the local a space where the homogenizing of cities for capital can occur. He also maintains, “the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial boundaries to exchange, movement and communication” (Harvey 1993, 39). Amin (2004) is helpful in his analysis of the relationship between local and global economic and social processes, arguing that even though the local, as well as place, are becoming more important in an increasingly
homogenized society, “cities and regions are not isolated local communities but part of
global networks of organization, which include everyday transnational flow of ideas and
the growth of transnational networks of influence”(Amin 2004, 33).

Yúdice (2003) and Kwon (2002), finally, are particularly useful because their
arguments elaborate on socio-economic factors by extending the analysis to consider
artistic practices. Yúdice focuses on the processes by which culture and its meanings or
effects are produced in relation to neoliberalism and contemporary globalization. He
claims that the economies of nationalism have been usurped by the economies of
globalism and that public opinion is responding to public art as part of a field of cultural
production driven by the economic allure that cultural tourism promises in a global
world. In the global era, culture has become expedient, and state-sponsored culture
industries have shifted into the private realm. To make his case, he discusses the
exhibition “inSite,” a large-scale bi-nationally sponsored international exhibition of site-
specific thematic art installations and interventions that takes place periodically in the
environs of the San Diego/Tijuana border between the US and Mexico. He argues that,
in this new structure of heavily managed cultural productions, artists bring a new form of
labour – they are the “mental workers” who bring the assemblage idea into the era of
“flexible production.” In other words, artists are service providers who can extend
capital to transform communities with their work, enabling them to yield value for
cultural institutions. Cultural institutions derive this value from a social return on the
investment in cultural development that can then be translated into market value in the
form of tourism and urban development. Community, he argues, “is being taken up by
social theory as the new ethical space in which people are supposed to find their well-being” (Yúdice 2003, 330-332). Kwon concurs, maintaining, “culture is being mined for social and economic ends for new structures of power under the aegis of global logics of accumulation” (Kwon in Yúdice 2003, 329). She argues further that artists and curators are part of the current socioeconomic order that thrives on production and consumption of difference, and that, by putting art in communities and real places, they can satisfy institutional demographic profiles, artists’ drives, or the fiscal needs of the city (Kwon in Yúdice 2003). These arguments suggest that art, as a cultural product, is integral in sustaining global tourist economies. Perhaps, then, artists have the potential to mobilize these new systems to ignite ideas and reveal new forms of civic engagement and community in which the local coheres with the global. It is with these considerations in mind that The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach, El Patio de Nin, and The Swamp Ward Window are examined.
Chapter 2
René Francisco Rodriguez: El Patio de Nin

Imagination alone enables us … to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that we can see and understand it without bias and prejudice, to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair.… Without this kind of imagination, which actually is understanding, we would never be able to take our bearings in the world. It is the only inner compass we have. (Arendt in Hill 1979, 292)

In this chapter I examine the work of René Francisco Rodríguez (René Francisco), an internationally recognized Cuban contemporary artist who lives in Havana and works in a range of media including painting, video, installation and performance. Francisco’s socially-engaged artworks, particularly the *El Romerillo Trilogy*, are the focus of my discussion. The trilogy project takes place in the neighbourhood of *el Romerillo*, and is an intervention in which the artist offered assistance in the form of manual labour to residents living in extremely poor conditions. In the work, Francisco addresses the citizen in the urban neighbourhood in a particular socio-political context. He strongly believes in the notion that art functions in the service of community; and as such the work demonstrates a deep commitment to notions of social responsibility and collective caring among citizens. I suggest that Francisco’s pedagogical approach to artmaking is a form of civic engagement and demonstrates a particular vision of how artists view themselves and their place in the world, and how they construct meaning to make sense of everyday life in Cuba. While there are projects by artists and collectives,
such as Proyecto Pilon and Proyecto de las Guaguas (Buses Project), that have taken place or continue to take place outside the city of Havana, I have chosen to focus on the socially-engaged projects of Francisco because they are informed by the rich social, cultural and political history of the city of Havana, the island’s largest urban centre; are enacted in specific neighbourhoods, and circulate globally through an international art market.\(^1\) As well, his practice, which began in the late 1970s, spans almost three decades during which time he has worked with various artist and non-artist groups in Havana, thus providing a historical context from which to look at the changing landscape of artistic practices in Havana over that period of time. Francisco works across different media and draws on creative traditions of institutional critique and collective involvement by artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke and, in particular, Joseph Beuys.\(^2\)

Like his mentors, Francisco challenges the boundaries between art and everyday life in

\(^1\)Proyecto Pilon was a community-based project held in Pilon, a city on the eastern edge of Cuba, where the artists worked outside of the institutions – in the community with the people – to address social issues such as housing shortages, mistrust in public institutions, religion and revolutionary art ideology. Proyecto de las Guaguas was also a community-based project that involved communication with the public by displaying art in buses (Camnitzer 1992).

\(^2\)Broodthaers’s work incorporated everyday objects, words, lettering, child-like drawings, handmade books, catalogues, and prints on everything from canvases attached to the wall to reliefs in plastic. In 1968 he established a ‘Museum of Modern Art’ of postcards of paintings and packing cases in his house in Brussels, which were followed by various other installation-structures. Haacke's works have dealt more with socio-political structures and the politics of art, functioning as critical examinations and as catalyst for public debate. (From the website, Tate Online “Hans Haacke”). Beuys was influenced by the experimental work of artists such as Nam June Paik and the Fluxus group, whose interdisciplinary approach and public events blurred the boundaries between literature, music, visual art, performance, and everyday life. Beuys' own performances, which he called "actions," demonstrated his belief that art could play a wider role in society, uniting art and life. He was involved in the founding of several activist groups, and in 1972, of the Free International University, which emphasized the creative potential in all human beings and advocated cross-pollination of ideas across disciplines. While he counted debate, discussion, and teaching as part of his expanded definition of art, Beuys also continued to make objects, installations, multiples, and performances. (From the websites, Walker Art Organization “Joseph Beuys: A Brief Biography” and Tate Online. “Joseph Beuys, 1921-1986”).
order to explore personal and social contexts of artistic production in a public forum. As well, because Francisco is an internationally recognized artist who travels in and out of Cuba regularly to exhibit and participate in residencies and other professional activities, his art works and projects, while taking place locally, circulate globally through the international art market. The increase in circulation of art outside Cuba is officially sanctioned by the state in large part because of the economic and ideological situation that emerged after the USSR withdrew economic support in 1989. During this period cultural exchange was an expedient means to generate desperately needed currency, while facilitating transnational cultural dialogue. This idea of the artist-as-ambassador is developed by Sujartha Fernandes in her discussion of Cuban culture. She maintains that art circulating in the global marketplace is used as a means to reconcile the socialist order with emerging values of individualism, personal happiness and social equity, while seeking to unify Cubans under a more inclusive vision of the nation state (Fernandes 2006).

Since the 1960s artists have been working in urban public spaces in myriad ways, initiating new forms of artistic engagement in an effort to transform the experience of the city. Questioning traditional definitions of art and the artist and addressing social and political issues, these kinds of art practices have become part of a critical contemporary discourse on artistic forms of engagement that manifest in and critically engage the public sphere. It is from the public sphere, as Arendt suggests, that the discourse of community emerges. Community, she argues, is not just a bounded place in that it references both physical place and metaphysical space of public and private
encounters, where public and private interests intersect (McGowan 1998). And, while these spaces of intersection may nurture a sense of what it means to be a citizen, as Stephen Carr reminds us, every society understands the concept of public differently and, “although the public-private balance is unique to each culture, it will shift under the influence of technology, cultural exchange, changing political and economic systems and the ethos of the time” (Carr 1992, 3). When we consider public in these terms and in the ways artists engage with it, notions of citizenship, community, belonging and exclusion are available for critical examination.

In considering urban communities, Hayden (1995) suggests that neighbourhoods, and I argue, the concept of the neighbourhood imaginary facilitate the formation of identity through a connection to place that cultivates personal and collective public memory. Manuel Castells states, “people socialize and interact in their local environment, in the village, in the city, or in the suburb, and they build social networks among their neighbours” (Castells in Forrest 2007, 9). While this remains significant in identity formation, he argues that “locally-based identities intersect with other sources of meaning and social recognition, in a highly diversified pattern that allows for alternative interpretations,” revealing, I argue, the complexities in the terminology and opening up the possibilities for a critical engagement with neighbourhood (Castells in Forrest 2003, 9). Recalling Byrne’s definitions of community and neighbourhood, I propose a fluid concept to support my argument, where neighbourhood is determined by the interplay of geographical place, socially constructed place and spatial associations. The
neighbourhood imaginary, then, as a conceptual framework, is a space in which to explore artist projects and imagine concepts and meanings of community and citizenship.

In Cuba, the public-private relationship is organized through a socialist politics, making it complex to map capitalist-democracy’s theoretical assumptions about this binary onto Cuban cultural practices. However, the dynamic of public and private life in Cuba has been dramatically altered by the fact that since the early 1990s, the official introduction of foreign investment in certain sectors of Cuban society -- largely driven by the tourist industry -- has resulted in a mixed economy, one that advances social hierarchies and raises questions about the country’s ideological future (Scarpaci 2000). The US trade embargo and the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 parachuted the country into a severe economic crisis. The resulting shift in economic policy in the 1990s brought much needed income to the country during this time, however, the threats posed by a capitalist culture, that Cuba had for so long struggled to resist, also started to become realities.

The political and economic situation of the Cuban nation makes problematic a comparative analysis of artistic forms of engagement, especially when performed in the context of western capitalist democracy. Nonetheless, there are experiences and values that are recognizable and communicable in spite of the specific conditions of politics and nation. These experiences and values are enacted on a local level, in the everyday lives of citizens. Arguably, then, locality is itself a shared condition within which the artists I analyze operate, a condition that permits the exiled, homeless, nationless and diasporic person to claim a citizenship. And, the concept of locality anchored in neighbourhood practices further facilitates cross-cultural analysis. This is not to assume that ideology is
inoperative; rather, that at the level of micro-cultures and micro-politics, one is able to discern ways in which power is mobilized and transformed. In Havana, artists who work within the space of the city, in its communities and within its neighbourhoods, have forged relationships and produced actions that mediate the national collective and the individual. In this way, Cuban artists share strategies, if not imaginaries, with artists working collectively on a global level.

In undertaking a cross-cultural analysis, it is important to examine how identity formation in relation to community and citizenship manifests within the particularities of Cuban society. Carr defines “public” as the space of publicity, or as “any place that features great accessibility, leaving aside the question of public or private ownership, where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or periodic festivities” (Carr 1992, xi). Arendt suggests that individualism and bourgeois preoccupation with economic activity, which she describes as signs of modern society’s downfall, creates competition of “all against all” and a fractured society, which isolates people from one and other, thereby creating an identity crisis. Since identity is intersubjective and not something we can determine in isolation, the “public” world in this context is ignored in favour of the “private” (McGowan 1998). In revolutionary Cuba, this type of privatized world was dismantled with the success of the Revolution in an effort to ensure equality and equitable distribution of resources for all citizens – the “public good” took precedence over the private.
However, the withdrawal of Soviet economic support in 1989 and the continued US trade embargo had a dramatic impact on the Cuban economy. These conditions prompted the state to declare the “special period in a time of peace” in 1990. This resulted in widespread rationing, introduction of hard currency through tourism, self-sufficiency in food production and the entry of Cuba into the global economy and culture. From 1993 to 1996 greater space was given to professional organizations, human rights, self-employment, and private home rentals and restaurants. However, in 1997 state intervention to reestablish control reversed or limited many of these economic reforms. During this time, critical debate and criticism moved into the realm of arts and culture where there was more tolerance for cultural expression (Fernandes 2006). This was in part due to the fact that artists were afforded privileged status, and permitted more easily than in previous decades to sell work in the international art market. Despite efforts by the state to protect Cuban citizens from capitalist and US economic and cultural forces, the opening up of opportunities for foreign investment and the income generated from cultural commodities and other sources of foreign currency has had dramatic implications for Cuba internally, one of the more problematic being the growth of hierarchies that deepen social and financial inequities.³

Because Cuba functions within a global economy, the framework of the neighbourhood imaginary can be effectively used to investigate citizenship practices within the contemporary context of globalism and the marketization of culture. Yúdice,

³Remittances are monies sent to relatives by former Cuban citizens who left Cuba after the revolution. While the US embargo placed restrictions on travel and trade with Cuba, remittances continued to provide revenues for the country in that the government receives a percentage of the remittances.
in his discussions of the expediency of culture in the 21st century, suggests that culture has become a resource to be harvested in the same way that nature-as-resource has been and that the managers of global resources have ‘discovered’ culture as a potential commodity that needs to be managed. Further to this, globalization has created a shift in the capitalist form of production; and culture, as part of the production of social life, becomes part of the social, political and economic agenda (Yúdice 2003). He also suggests that culture as a resource becomes expedient for national and ideological purposes, and for socio-political and economic improvement, allowing for smoother flows of capital. Cuba is not unfamiliar with the effects of global circulation of culture. For example, the image of Che Guevera still holds iconic power in and outside Cuba as a representation of a socialist entity that challenged a dominant superpower, the United States of America. As well, popular films such as The Buena Vista Social Club, made for a non-Cuban market, inculcate Cuban music culture internationally. These examples inscribe Cuba in a world history and global economy that fuels Cuban tourism and generates foreign investment. It is here that the global world intersects with nation, inserting the local into the global economy. Once again, as Forrest argues, the link between localism and globalism is the result of a search for social identity and social meaning in a world where global capitalism dominates. This, he claims, has resulted in a renewed interest in neighbourhood, where local social interactions and familiar markers in the neighbourhood take on more significance (Forrest 2003). The neighbourhood imaginary, therefore, provides the discursive frame that cuts through cultural and political boundaries to facilitate analysis of the ways artistic forms of engagement at the local
level utilize alternative public spaces to rethink nation, identity and citizenship within the discourse of globalism.

With these considerations in mind, I organize my analysis around the concept of locality and neighbourhood as a place of civic engagement and a space where the complexities of public and private lives surface. In order to understand how existing social conditions inform Francisco’s work, I provide a brief historical background of urban development in pre-revolutionary Cuba and an overview of artistic practices from the 1960s onward with particular focus on collective practices that intervene in public spaces and neighbourhoods in Havana. I also utilize Yúdice’s idea of “culture-as-resource” to examine the implications for socially-engaged art practices.

In 2003 Francisco began the El Romerillo Trilogy, a series of interventions that integrated the socialist ideal with lived reality. These are Francisco’s most recent series of socially-motivated art projects and they have resonance with “un trabajo social” (a social work), which was initiated by the artists’ union in 1994. “Un trabajo social” was a call to remediate living conditions across the city. For example ‘el patio de mi casa,’ which took place in several homes in el Romerillo, was intended to resuscitate games and traditions, rescue values, and generate national pride and solidarity (Weiss 2007). The individual works of the El Romerillo Trilogy include La Casa de Rosa (Rosa’s House), which was completed in 2003 and El Patio de Nin (Nin’s garden), which was completed in 2005 (figs. 1-4). A third, for neighbourhood resident, Daniel Perez, is still in production. The trilogy of works produced by Francisco were inspired by his desire to help several individuals who were living in extremely difficult conditions in the
neighbourhood of el Romerillo. Located on the margins of the city near the Columbia military base and the neighbourhood of Atares, just outside the walls of the Instituto Superior de Arte, el Romerillo is a neighbourhood with which Francisco had a long-standing personal connection. As a poor art student he spent time there purchasing goods through the black market, playing music for neighbourhood festivals and parties, or lugging water buckets to help put out fires.

For Francisco, returning some twenty-odd years later, the project was a way to return a favour to a neighbourhood that helped him when he was a poor student. In the research stage of the El Romerillo Trilogy, he spent time in consultation with neighbourhood residents, knocking on doors in order to determine who members of the community felt were their neighbours most in need, the most isolated from society, and who had not, in their opinion, received what they deserved. After several interviews Francisco found three candidates who met the requirements: Rosa Estevez, Nin (Marcelina) Ochoa and Daniel Perez. After discussions with them concerning their immediate needs and wishes he set about producing the projects. The first, La Casa de Rosa, involved renovating Rosa Estevez’s bathroom and kitchen to provide her with running water to wash her hands and a new toilet bowl that flushed properly. In 2005 Francisco undertook the El Patio de Nin project. Nin Ochoa was an elderly woman with severe physical health problems that confined her to a wheelchair. Her main activity each day was to sit on her porch and watch the daily activities of the neighbourhood. Due to a lack of financial resources, the view from Nin’s porch was one of deterioration and neglect. Rubbish, junk, cans and bottles were evident everywhere. Francisco
transformed the space into a garden as a gift to the elderly woman. The work was documented in video and projected on a large screen outdoors in the neighbourhood as a way to thank and inform the neighbourhood about the project. He also documented himself and Nin in photographs and paintings, which enabled him to raise funds for the projects through arts organizations in the international community.

Francisco’s experience in el Romerillo is recorded in an interview with the artist that took place in April 2006. In the interview, he reflects on the experience in terms of the sense of community and civic pride that evolved through the course of the project. The relationship with people in the neighbourhood took time to develop into one that instilled a sense of hope and pride of place. People from the district would eventually approach him to ask whether they could participate. Francisco states that he experienced many difficulties carrying out the projects because authorities questioned his motivations, wondering whether he was a spy for the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) set up to reveal Cuba’s plight to the world. For Francisco, the authorities’ level of mistrust towards a citizen wanting to help fellow citizens was a reflection of the changes that had been taking place in Cuba over the preceding 10 years, changes that created suspicion about and resistance to the acts of community and collective responsibility in which Cuban society was so rooted (Francisco 2006).

Over ten years earlier, in 1989, Francisco formed the DUPP (Desde Una Pragmatica Pedagogica -- From a Pragmatic Pedagogy) collective, and during the “special period,” began his social insertion projects as a way of connecting social and artistic space. Francisco started teaching art at the Instituto Superior del Arte in Havana
in the early 1980s. Having studied there since 1977, shortly after the institute opened, he drew upon its strengths and weaknesses to develop his own pedagogical approach to artmaking. Coming from an environment where art school studies focused on paradigms modeled in the West, Francisco saw the transference of knowledge as an opportunity to subvert these western models by engaging in interpersonal relationships outside of academic hierarchies, where student-teacher relations were communal. In the interest of re-envisioning teacher-student, as well as artist-society relations, Francisco formed DUPP. It was inspired by a desire to find new ways of thinking about art practices and new forms of artistic engagement with the public and with peers that involved a collective way of working, a methodology in which hierarchical relationships between student-teacher, public-artist, institution-artist and transmitter-receptor disappeared. The collective was an alternative form of artistic practice that, through social awareness and action, produced projects with creative and utilitarian meaning. Francisco argues that, because of the political situation and the risk of censorship during this time, there was an opportunity for artists to develop new metaphors that could transform a difficult situation into a productive space (Francisco in Figueroa 2007).

In 1989, Francisco realized La Casa Nacional, a DUPP project that involved a team of art students who worked in San Isidro, a poor neighbourhood in Old Havana. Similar in concept to the microbrigadistas from the early years of the revolution, La Casa Nacional was an act of community solidarity -- of listening and of sharing -- through
collective attention to the needs of fellow citizens. The project was a series of public interventions that involved artists working in the community, in this case, in a block of communal apartments in the urban core. Student artists approached residents and offered their services to renovate and redecorate according to the inhabitant specifications (Wallace 1997). They worked and lived in the resident’s home, producing something that was requested by the tenant. Personal tastes and desires resulted in a range of requests that included repairing washing machines, making tables or beds (Francisco 2006). Students were introduced to a concept of art in which art production was a collective, participatory activity, where authorship was with the collective as opposed to the individual. DUPP lasted for ten years and represents an important moment in Cuban art in terms of the emphasis on collaborative action, performance and the urban environment. Other artists working in Havana and using similar methodologies include Tania Bruguera, Lazaro Saavedra and Ruslan Torres. These artists initiated other collective practices including Collectivo EnEMA, which was founded by Lazaro Saavedra, Department of Public Interventions (DIP), established by Ruslan Torres, and the Arte de Constructo (Art of Conduct), which was developed by Tania Bruguera (Figueroa 2007). Through such forms of artistic engagement, these artists, most of who

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4The social microbrigades were initiated by Castro in the early 1970s to help rehabilitate buildings and structures that had fallen to disrepair. These largely included day care centres, hospitals, schools, senior citizen centres, and other non-residential structures (Segre 1997).
5Collectivo Enema came together in the late 1990s and, for the VIII Biennal de Havana in 2003, prepared a durational performance that involved members hanging upside down from scaffolding in the Centre for the Development of Visual Arts. In addition, a video feed in the same space inverted the performance, showing the artists in a “normal” position. As a critical social commentary, this piece presents a powerful reminder of the disillusionment that existed among contemporary artists in Cuba. The collective DIP (Department of Public Interventions), which also created works for the VIII Biennal, deployed several interventions throughout the city. This group of young artists, an ad hoc collective, was united by a refusal
still practice in Cuba, are adding their voices to the cultural discourse that is defining contemporary art, as well to the broader discourse surrounding notions of citizenship and community. The *El Romerillo Trilogy* builds on this history.

As one of the first of a generation of artists to “grow up” within the Revolution, Francisco graduated from art school in the late 1970s. His practice is informed by the work of previous generations of artists who were producing during the first twenty years of the revolutionary period. In revolutionary Cuba of the 1960s, the ideas and issues raised by previous generations started to take shape, the utopian ideal became a reality and Cuban contemporary art started to take on new forms of expression. At this time, Cuba was preoccupied with the creation of a national identity within a socialist ideology, and this became the focus of artists, particularly in film and photography. The visual art produced in the 1960s and 1970s in Cuba was very much “within the revolution,” focusing on an optimistic and socialist national agenda. It was during this period that many important cultural institutions, such as Instituto Cubano de Arte y Industria...
Cinematográficos (ICAIC) and La Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC), were established, and the Cuban film industry began. The Instituto Superior del Arte (ISA) was established in Havana in 1976 as a specialized institution for the visual arts that espoused a productivist ideal, demanding attention to daily life and a utopian paradigm. With the establishment of these two institutions, the visual arts became a fundamental part of shaping Cuban culture (Watson 1997).

By the mid-1970s, during Cuba’s gray period of “sovietization,” hard-line socialist enforcement resulted in art being used as a revolutionary weapon and, as a result, photo-realism and images of naturalness prevailed (Wallace 1997). Or, as Cuban artist, curator and critic Antonio Eligio Fernández (Tonel) put it, “from the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s, bureaucracy and dogmatic ideology defined the cultural arena” (Tonel 2001, 31). State support of the arts through government institutions was at its peak in the 1980s, and as a result, this became a period of experimentation in form, content and context, marking the beginnings of the “new” Cuban art with the advent of artists who had been born and educated within the revolution. As Tonel argues, “in this Cuban ‘Big Bang’ theory, the art of the eighties was careful to demarcate its territory, undoing and re-creating frontier” (Tonel 2001, 31). During this time, artists attempted to engage with the masses in the streets to decrease the gap between art and life. These artists, who remained in Cuba after the Mariel exodus in 1980, believed in art within the social realm and placed themselves ethically within the revolution, despite the fact that its ideology set parameters for expression (Wallace
1997). It was at this time, in the early 1980s, that Francisco started teaching art at the Instituto Superior del Arte in Havana, having studied there since 1977.

One of the landmark exhibitions of this period was the “Volumen 1” exhibition held in Havana in 1981. The artists in this show were the first to graduate from the Instituto Superior del Arte and the first generation to engage in new processes that encouraged artists to break with traditional art practices. Abandoning realism and super realism in favour of internalized notions of identity allowed their work to be generated organically rather than explicitly. Camnitzer suggests that artists in this period were making art from a place of deep commitment to the ideology of the nation, creating artwork that integrated into the system but still questioned inconsistencies in it (Camnitzer 1992). It was also at this time that connections with the international art scene were taking place. Exhibitions such as the first Havana Biennial, held in 1984, marked the beginning of Cuba’s reengagement with international market economies and ideologies, and allowed Cuban art to be seen as creative expression rather than as dogmatic socialist product. There has been some suggestion that, because government policy allowed an increase in exposure to foreign influences, Cuban art gained an aesthetic and similarity in appearance to Western mainstream art, an appearance that led one critic to argue that the new art and its aesthetic constituted an abandonment of national identity. “Falling into the false homogeneity of a cosmopolitan art,” he argued, it “stimulat[ed] the ignorance of geographic and ideological borders” (Angel in

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*The Mariel exodus took place in 1980 and involved a mass exodus of Cubans from the Port of Mariel. Rising discontent with the conditions in Cuba forced Castro to open the doors to all those who wanted to leave and over 100,000 Cubans, many of whom were artists, left the country.*
Supporters of the new aesthetic argued that, while some appropriation may have occurred, artists of this period were still engaging with the notion of collective work, addressing social issues and exploring a Cuban answer to international trends.

During the later half of the 1980s artists started to engage more directly with society in general. This led to art that moved into extra-aesthetic zones, where the transformative aspects of art practices allowed artists to engage in projects more relevant to society. This third wave of artists in the 1980s was individualistic as well as intensely group-oriented. Happenings and performances became common practice and transformative art projects emerged. Artist groups and projects included *Grupo Provisional, 1,2,3...12, Grupo Iman, Grupo Puré, Arte Calle, Proyecto Pilon* and *Proyecto de las Guaguas.* According to Camnitzer (1994), the young artists in this

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7 Tomás Angel was an art critic for the Havana-based publication *Caimán Barbudo* (the Bearded Cayman). This magazine, started in 1966, was a platform for young writers to offer a critical analysis of cultural events.

8 *Grupo Hexagono* is one example. It was an interdisciplinary group that produced interventions on the landscape and community-based projects involving collaborations with workers in factories and other workplaces.

9 *Grupo Provisional* was a group whose membership came together as projects arose and whose work was mainly concerned with the practice of the revolution. They saw themselves as more nationalistic, concerned with looking inward to Cuba, than the *Volumen I* group, who they perceived to be more influenced by foreign trends. Performances by the *Grupo Provisional* group included crashing arts events to perform humorous critiques. *Arte Calle* was a more ideological group than *Grupo Provisional.* It had a core of eight members and from the beginning was anti-establishment, producing graffiti, mural paintings and participating in protest or catalytic activities. This group was more interested in examining social and political issues than in making art objects. In one instance, when the group was officially invited to paint a wall mural in a public venue, they were given washable paints because of the controversial nature of the art. Another public event involved the leader of the group, Aldito Menéndez, attending a lecture by American artist Robert Rauschenberg, wearing only a loincloth and feather to signify the colonization of Cuba by the Americas. *Grupo Puré,* on the other hand, focused on the art scene and generated collective and individual works. The group’s intent was to destroy the myth of the art star and the cult of individualism and, unlike *Arte Calle,* it was not opposed to foreign influences but appropriated them for its own purpose.
period were questioning everything, claiming that through their art the rectification of Cuba and its national identity would be addressed. They were committed to the ideology of the revolution and wanted, through their work, to use national issues in a direct and local way to push for improvements.

However, socialist ideology came under severe scrutiny by artists in the late 1980s when the collision of internal and external political and ideological factors brought significant change to the country. As mentioned earlier, the withdrawal of support from the Soviet Union in 1989, the continued US embargo, and the ongoing internal rectification process all had an effect on the visual arts culture of this period. The “special period in a time of peace” brought with it scarcity and increased commercialization of valuable resources. The Foreign Investment Act, which was introduced in 1995, resulted in a mixed economy that still exists today. This introduction of foreign investments “resulted in a socio-cultural shift; distortions of streetscapes and public spaces, visually, functionally and socially, through scale and character distortions and the introduction of inequality in terms of access to the American dollar” (Scarpaci 2000, 349). At this time, hardship and inadequate housing persisted in a financially depleted Cuba. Even with the elimination of shantytowns and the development of new housing projects other issues arose. New immigrants crowded into neighbourhoods such as el Romerillo and la Corbata in the neighbourhood of Atares (west of Miramar), and

10The rectification process was initiated by the government in 1986 and was intended to eliminate errors and inefficiencies within the state. It was an effort to correct mistakes and find new solutions to problems that had been a result of what was seen as an economic liberalization that had started in the early 1980s. It reaffirmed socialist ideas of volunteerism and a collective philosophy. The young artists felt that the real rectification process was happening through their work (Camnitzer 1994).
because financial deficiencies continued, overcrowding and extremely poor living conditions persisted (Wolfe 2000). It was during this period that Francisco’s projects with the DUPP collective began. DUPP lasted for 10 years. Despite the dissolution of DUPP, Francisco continued his socially-engaged art projects with the El Romerillo Trilogy. While Francisco’s personal connection to the neighborhood is evident, a rich urban development history also informs this work.

Over the course of the Havana’s history, urban neighbourhoods have been configured to accommodate shifting political and social landscapes. El Romerillo is an example of one of the many urban neighbourhoods of Havana established after the revolution to provide adequate housing for Havana’s citizens. It is also a neighbourhood where the contradictions between ideology and reality reveal social hierarchies that exist in Cuba today. Historically, Havana, the capital city of Cuba, has been party to the capitalist excesses of European and North American colonization, as well as the mediating successes and failures of socialist planning in the revolutionary period, when the country was supported by the Soviet bloc. With such a history, Havana is no stranger to the forces of global power. The core of the city, known as Old Havana, where the port was located, played a central role as the commercial and financial hub of the city (Segre 1997). Cuba was a Spanish colony until 1898 when occupation of the island by the United States began the North Americanization of Havana. According to historian Louis Perez Jr., North American influences were a major factor in the development of a Cuban identity at this time of nation formation. They “metabolized from within during routine negotiations of daily life,” becoming principal elements in the individual lives of Cubans.
During this period, the United States government invested in basic infrastructure in order to ensure the evolution of a modern city in Havana. While the Spanish maintained substantial economic power, the fall of sugar prices in the 1920s created a severe economic crisis for Cuba and resulted in an influx of capital investment from the United States. Dictator Gerardo Machado, who was elected in 1925, took out loans from US banks to help boost the economy (Segre 1997). The sugar industry was flourishing, and Cuban success was maintained through a strategy of specialized production of sugar for export rather than consumption at home. This was to the exclusion of other products, and eventually, according to Perez (1999), to the exclusion of other markets, thus serving to further Cuba’s dependence on the United States. By the 1930s, growth of the sugar trade and increase in commerce from the United States resulted in an increase in business in the city core. Many of the ground floors of residences were converted into warehouses and housing was replaced by commercial ventures. The old palaces were divided into flats, which were further subdivided into rooms for rent -- what became known as ciudadelas (boarding houses) -- that caused severe overcrowding. Shantytowns appeared on the fringes as people moved to find accommodation. Havana extended west and south and, with it, the areas of urban poor, who were now encroaching on the exclusive neighbourhoods. Opportunism turned to corruption as police took protection money from businesses and brothels, and the gap between the rich and the poor grew (Wolfe 2000, 4).

In the 1930s, the United States staged and produced five major public works projects (sewage, electric street lights, telephones), the most significant of which included
laying the groundwork for the construction of the Malécon, the boulevard that links the financial and commercial core with the outlying suburban areas. This roadway provided wealthy elites the opportunity to build outside the core but still have easy access to its amenities. This led to further urban decline of the city centre and an increase in segregation of social classes. By 1900 there were three distinct parts of Havana: ‘Old’ Havana, ‘New’ Havana (Centro, Vedado and Cerro) and the ‘suburban’ Havana (Miramar, Mariano etc). Suburban Havana, along the ocean to the west of the city, took on a North American style. The neighbourhoods of Vedado, Miramar and Country Club were the neighbourhoods where wealthy habaneros lived. Residential segregation was highly evident all along the ocean corridor as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat lived in neighbourhoods surrounding these to the south (Segre 1997). These urban settlement patterns in the first few decades of the 20th century helped shape the development of Havana’s neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, the growth of the urban poor continued through these decades with a growth of substandard housing such as the aforementioned ciudadelas (rooming houses), as well as solares and casas de la vecinidad (tenement houses). In the 1950s approximately 300,000 people, one third of the population (largely black and mulatto) were living in dire conditions. Because pre-revolutionary Havana, like many other large capitalist metropolitan cities of North America and Europe, adopted urban planning patterns that concentrated building efforts on neighbourhoods that catered to the wealthy and the middle class, the urban poor were often marginalized and ignored. In this sense, neighbourhood became a divisive or class stratification tool rather than a site of communal responsibility for all citizens.
By the time the revolution arrived, Havana was two cities, the core and the suburbs. The decentralized neighbourhoods established during the pre-revolutionary period had created a spatial division between urban socioeconomic groups (Wolfe 2000). The wealthy lived to the west and the urban poor within the central and old city, as well as in shantytowns and squatter settlements on the outskirts of the city. After 1959, with the massive ideological shift brought on by the revolution, neighbourhoods began to focus on their citizens and on meeting the collective needs of their residents. Fidel Castro initiated corrective housing policies designed to deal with both rural-urban and urban-urban inequities, mobilizing the poor and dispossessed to build housing developments. People who were unable to afford it, or who were living in tenements, were not required to pay rent (Segre 1997). The grand homes in the neighbourhood of Miramar were largely abandoned, turned into schools or government buildings, or given to former servants to run as residences. The initial restructuring that took place in the 1960s was followed by Cuba’s gray period of ‘sovietization’ in the early 1970s, when the introduction of rigid institutional structures resulted in urban planning that was ill considered and aesthetically bland. The decade between 1976 and 1986, however, saw the beginnings of the Poder Popular (Popular Power) organizations, and in 1988, during the “Correction of Mistakes Period,” the GPDIC (Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital) was created to develop a participatory model to be used by

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11 This was a period from the late 1960s into the 1970s, when the revolutionary government employed rigid institutional structures to control tightly all aspects of cultural life (Segre 1997).
citizens for the improvement of conditions in Havana. They established the Comprehensive Workshops For Neighbourhood Change, groups that were to address social and physical aspects of the neighbourhood, adapting a broad decision-making model and focusing on improving housing, developing neighbourhood identity, developing the local economy and educating children and youth (Segre 1997). Unlike the early years of the revolution, when the centralized planning models left engineers and architects alone responsible for decisions, this model saw workshops comprised of interdisciplinary teams (sociologists, engineers, architects, social workers, planners, etc), working together with citizens to propose changes that would improve the lives of people living in the neighbourhood. Partnerships with NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) ensured financial stability and the possibility for improvements. Theoretically, the participatory model opened up possibilities for social equity and citizen-informed planning approaches, yet it is important to note that, while these workshops and citizen groups were intended as opportunities for citizen participation, they were also used in neighbourhood surveillance, with some members reporting on activities and incidents that could be seen as opposing the goals of the state. In the 1990s, the “Special Period in a Time of Peace” saw Cuba adopt a mixed economy, where the US dollar was officially allowed limited access to the market, thereby changing

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12 The Poder Populares were introduced in 1976. They were local government authorities that allowed citizens to nominate and elect representatives to these municipal councils. Intended as a means for citizen power, they did not have any budgetary power and so often were disseminating information of decisions made centrally by the national government. In the 1990s, the Poder Populares were enlarged through the addition of neighbourhood councils who advocated for local issues. However, it is also well documented that these councils were used to inform on possible dissidents.
Havana significantly. It is from this urban history that the social and economic context of Francisco’s projects can be understood.

The reduction in the restrictions surrounding foreign investment that occurred during this period resulted in a moderate mixed economy with strong state control (Scarpaci 2000). This shift affected artistic production in Cuba significantly. In the 1980s, international exhibitions such as the Havana Biennial showcased Cuban art in a Latin-American context and, in the 1990s, the Biennial took on a more international focus, placing Cuban art once again on the periphery, although this time of a “Western” center. Critics argue that the realities of the “special period” created such a climate of discontent and cynicism among artists that the artistic culture lost its focus and shifted from one of a collective, nationalistic dialogue to a more individualistic one, less engaged with its audience and at risk of losing its national identity (de Oca Moreda 1999).

Montes de Oca Moreda (1999) further suggests that while most Cuban art acknowledges “sociocultural conditions on the island and each person’s participation in a shared experience,” the art of the ‘90s was not about “bolstering national identity or revealing ideological or political mechanisms connecting art and society.” Perspectives were becoming more individualized, and as a result there was a “decentralization of group poetics, an art culture that lost its centre, an atomizing or pulverizing of the art culture where as many trends could be found as can be counted” (Montes de Oca Moreda 1999, 9). There was a cynicism and loss of belief in the transformative qualities of art.

Francisco is one of a number of artists who maintain a socially-engaged art practice in Havana. The location of his projects in semi-public spaces in the
neighbourhood provides more possibilities for engagement with a broader audience than work presented within the mainstream venues of galleries and institutions. Critics, however, question who benefits from this kind of community-based, social service form of artwork. It is clear that Cuba artists in the 1990s, and now in the 21st century, are more mobile and exhibit outside the country on an increasing scale. Many are in greater demand off the island and are allowed to travel to exhibit, maintain foreign galleries and sell their work more easily outside the country. Like a number of Cuban artists, Francisco falls into this category and, as a result, maintains a privileged status within the social hierarchy that provides him with opportunities not available to all Cubans. He received international financial support to produce the *El Romerillo Trilogy*, using the funds to study in Germany and initiate a new collective that would eventually fund the project. The initiative took the form of a *Center of Communication* in Germany, a place that builds links between artists working inside and outside Cuba. It was through the centre that he raised funds both from individuals and institutions to assist people in Cuba (Francisco 2006).

What happens when artists forge relationships with external sources, where ideologies differ and where power differentials persist? What happens when Nin Ocha leaves the neighborhood and appears on the walls of finance centres and Venice Biennales? Kwon (2002) suggests that when artists work with institutions or curators to collaborate on projects sited in particular communities they run the risk of reifying those communities. As I noted in chapter one that, while site-specific art can lead to the unearthing of repressed histories and provide greater visibility for marginalized groups
and issues, it can also serve another agenda by fulfilling the thematic drive of the artist or institution (Kwon 2002). Francisco launched *El Patio de Nin* into the international art arena at the 9th Havana Biennial in 2006, and again at the Venice Biennale in 2007. In the Havana Biennial, the documentation of the project was displayed on five flat screen high-resolution monitors in the Miramar Trade Centre, which is located in the upscale suburban neighbourhood of Miramar (fig. 5). The irony of displaying the documentary footage in a corporate headquarters underscores the contradictions that exist in Cuba, and as Camnitzer (1994) suggests, reflects on the way artists in Cuba are critically engaging within the system while still questioning its inconsistencies.

While it is true that Francisco’s project is not a ‘gift’ in its purest sense, does this financial remuneration necessarily compromise the work and its social and artistic value? Once again, as Yúdice points out in his analysis of *InSite 97*, a binational project of artist interventions on the Mexican/US border, artists need to become users, collaborators who intervene in order to have labour expended recognized and compensated (Yúdice 2003). Because culture is the resource in the global economy, he argues, it comes with the market’s expectation of return on investment, and artists must find ways to negotiate this reality. Francisco uses the space of the city, its publicity, and its possibilities for civic engagement to produce *El Patio de Nin*. As well, his connections to external sources and his privileged position as an artist in Cuban society enable him to market his works and bring them into a global arena. *El Patio de Nin*

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13 René Francisco did produce art objects in the end, a documentary video that has circulated in such renowned venues as the Venice Biennale in 2007, and a series of paintings based on the project that sell on the international art market.
reveals the living conditions of a private citizen in Havana and through the work of the project demonstrates a pedagogical approach to artmaking in which the artist as citizen serves the community. As in Häussler’s *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, Francisco uses the life of Nin Ochoa in the production of the work and perhaps, as Kwon (2002) argues, even if reifying individuals or communities, makes visible new ways of considering citizens who otherwise disappear.

![Image](image.png)


Chapter 3
Iris Häussler: The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach

Cities are not just collections of material artefacts; rather, they are also sites through which ideologies are projected, cultural values expressed and power is exercised. (Hall 2006, 3)

In this chapter I examine the work of Toronto-based artist Iris Häussler, focusing primarily on her most recent project, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, which took place in a neighbourhood in downtown Toronto, Ontario. I will also provide brief descriptions of previous work in order to support my analysis. In her practice, Häussler produces art environments modelled on living spaces drawn from lives of individuals that she invents. Through the fictional narrative, she explores the real and the imagined, and the insider and the outsider. She locates the artworks in public and semi-public spaces in neighbourhoods; in hotels, apartments and private homes. By situating the works in real places, she shifts the focus of meaning from the art object as autonomous entity, to the art object in socio-cultural context, where the relationship between the viewer and the environment allows new meanings, to emerge, based on the viewers experience.

*The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* chronicled the imaginary life of a German immigrant and was installed in a house in a residential urban neighbourhood over a six-month period in 2006. Häussler’s work begins with the conceptualization of the fictive person through object-making. As the artist-as-fictive person adapts to ‘his’ or ‘her’ surroundings, the narrative slowly emerges. She states that, “the fictive person
assimilates to this new home (in a broad sense almost like a neighbourhood and its social distinctness) in their clothing, lifestyle, furnishings, etc.” (Häussler in Meyer-Stoll 2001, 88). Häussler immerses herself in the psychological and material world of the fictive Wagenbach -- imagining his daily work and leisure activities, his memories, his family history -- fabricating works from materials and objects that he may have gathered in the course of his daily routines. In this way, she engages with the sociality of the neighbourhood to further embed the project in the vernacular of the area. With this in mind, I propose that the concept of the neighbourhood imaginary is helpful in facilitating an analysis of Häussler’s work. It provides a framework that places the local within a broader social context, where the limits and possibilities of community as social construct can be critically examined.

Forrest argues that the effects of globalism have resulted in a search for social identity and social meaning in the perceived traditions and rootedness of neighbourhoods (Forrest 2003). This, he claims, has sparked renewed interest among academics in the neighbourhood as place-bound entity. In their research on the subject, Peter Clutterebuck and Marvyn Novick suggest that knowledge of place can be determined at the neighbourhood level and that, neighbourhoods, as an ingredient in identity formation and urban planning, are the “logical nexus for citizenship engagement” (Clutterebuck and Novick 2005, 3). Neighbourhoods are often the loci for social support, social integration and acclimatization for many new immigrants. As they emerge as spaces where alternative forms of identity and community can be negotiated, local neighbourhoods also function as sites of cultural, social and political interaction. And, as I discuss in my
Introduction, they are also contested spaces. Localism may suggest progressive, inclusive social practices yet may also ful?l regressive impulses that feed intolerance towards difference, which serves to exclude and marginalize. Therefore, I suggest that the neighbourhood provides a discursive space in which a critical engagement with the concept of locality resonates in a broader global context.

Miwon Kwon suggests that what exists today is a “contemporary condition of increased departicularization and spatial undifferentiation, fuelled by the effects of globalization of technology and telecommunications that accommodates an expanding capitalist order” (Kwon 2002, 156). She goes on to say that the drive towards a homogenization and universalization of civilization reinforces the need for a form of resistance that allows for the emergence of distinctness (Kwon 2002). Recalling Harvey who argues, “the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial boundaries to exchange, movement and communication,” I suggest that meanings associated with place, identity and citizenship have become more complex in a global era (Harvey in Hayden 1995, 43). In order to facilitate an examination of these meanings, I use neighbourhood as a fluid concept, as a juxtaposition of geographical, social, political and psychological associations, where community overlaps with neighbourhood. And, as the concept of citizenship and identity shifts under changing social, political and economic conditions, I argue that the local is a place from which Häussler’s project can critically engage with the sociality of the neighbourhood.
Lippard (1997) claims that, in contemporary society, the growth and transformation of capitalism has incorporated local distinctions and difference, so that a normalizing or homogenizing of place is occurring. As well, she maintains that space has the potential to subsume difference. Space, she suggests, is not neutral but an ideological product and instrument in itself, and the abstraction of space, or the creation of what theorist Marc Augé calls nonplaces (airports, box store malls), poses a threat to the acknowledgement and appreciation of difference.\footnote{Non-places, as Augé describes them, are not relational, historical or concerned with identity. They cater to the human need to control the present and move us from one place to another, so that we are able to experience more. Augé, therefore, sees a non-place as a product of super modernity; a quality of living in a state of excess, where importance is placed on creating meaning for everything, and where the excessive consumption of images and experiences is required to create both personal and global histories (Augé 2005, 77-79).} Arendt suggests that self-awareness and identity formation, while not necessarily place-bound, are space-bound in that it is in “the spaces of appearance,” the public sphere, where people engage publicly with others in their plurality to understand and bring their own (and society’s) identity into being (Arendt 1958). Building on Arendt’s ideas, Phillips (2004) maintains that the public sphere is a mutable realm where conflict and difference arise, a space we share wherever it occurs. It is, therefore, not only a spatial construct it is also a metaphysical one, where art engages with the site, the social dimension, the personal and the collective elements of civic life. Yúdice complicates this idealism in his discussion of inSite -- a large-scale bi-national exhibition of site-specific thematic art installations and public interventions that occurs every four or five years in the area of the San Diego/Tijuana border.\footnote{Yúdice describes inSite as a new structure for cultural institutions in the global era. They are heavily managed structures where curators, co-directors, administrators, marketers, and artists all work together to generate cultural capital for cultural institutions that feed the global economy. So now, he suggests,} He argues
that in heavily managed exhibitions such as *inSite*, artists bring a new form of labour; they are the “mental workers” who bring the assemblage idea into the era of “flexible production” (Yúdice 2003, 331). In other words, artists are increasingly encouraged to become service providers, refunotionalizing art practices, transforming communities, and becoming catalysts for cultural citizenship through cultural institutions that will in turn derive value in the form of tourism, urban development and social return, which is then translated into market value (Yudice 2003). Clearly, artists are complicit in these new systems for artistic production; yet, as I argue, they also have the potential to mobilize these structures in a public forum and, through their work, engage with the local to foreground ideas that might otherwise disappear.

*The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* was installed in 105 Robinson Street, a small house located in a residential neighbourhood known locally as the Queen St. West area, just west of Bathurst Street and north of Queen Street West in downtown Toronto. For the project, Häussler ‘uncovered’ the life of Wagenbach by imagining, in exhaustive detail, the psychology of a man whose life story was shaped by the particularities of this neighbourhood. What distinguished Joseph Wagenbach’s house from other homes in the neighbourhood was the Municipal Archives sign, which was erected on the front lawn (figs. 6-7). It was an official looking structure that lent credibility to the research taking place inside; the assessment and cataloguing of the artefacts of long-time neighbourhood resident Joseph Wagenbach. Häussler begins the fictional account of Wagenbach’s life
in Germany, where he was born in 1929. He immigrated to Canada via Paris in 1962 before purchasing the house in 1967. He spent his life in Toronto working odd jobs until the age of 77, when he suffered a stroke that put him in a nursing home. No longer able to communicate, and with no family support, his house was turned over to the Office of the Public Guardians and Trustees to assess it for resale. Discovering the house packed full of all manner of artefacts and objects, and unsure of the cultural value of these works, the officers turned the evaluation process over to the Office of the Municipal Archives. For the first few months of the assessment process, the house was open to the public for guided tours by archivists.

After donning a lab coat and cotton archival gloves, one entered the tiny house and immediately encountered an ancient sofa in front of two TV sets, which were stacked one on top of each other. This tiny six by four foot space doubled as bedroom and living space for Mr. Wagenbach, since almost every surface, most of the floor space in the living room and, indeed, the rest of the house was overrun with sculpture and drawings jumbled together with the detritus of everyday living. Bulbous hanging sculptures made from doll parts and stuffed animals, and layered over with a brown concrete and wax-like skin, emerged out of corners and bumped up against door jams and other sections of wall space (figs. 8-10). A wooden box containing a concrete cast of what appeared to be the skeleton of a jackrabbit sat on a coffee table next to the couch (fig. 11). A large columnar sculpture, constructed from plaster casts of flowerpots and other found objects, extended from the centre of the living room up through a hole in the ceiling into the attic and downwards into a small cellar-like space. Even the bathtub was filled with found objects,
indicating that it was used as a staging area for future sculptural works. The vague sense of the sculptures’ similarity to the works of modernist sculptors Constantin Brancusi and Louise Bourgeois is explained by Wagenbach’s having spent several years in Paris in the late 1940s and 1950s, where he may have encountered and been influenced by their work.

Interspersed, and almost indistinguishable from the artwork and other materials, is the evidence of everyday activities: an unmade bed, dirty dishes, stockpiles of tissues, family photographs pinned to the wall or piled in drawers, and a shrine-like room to a woman, Anna Neritti (a former lover who left suddenly in 1974) that seemed recently inhabited and that contained all manner of personal belongings including hats, dresses, undergarments, shoes, jewellery, sewing patterns, bolts of fabric and photographs (figs. 12-13). The attic, which could only be reached by climbing a narrow ladder, contained the top section of the Brancusi-esque column in the living room on the floor below. Mounted on top of the column was a small sculpture of a rabbit carefully lit with a crude homemade light fixture, and pinpointed on a map of Germany in the hallway was the location of Wagenbach’s childhood home.

The residence looked like many others in the area, one of a series of tiny houses that were at one time homes for new immigrant families newly arrived in Toronto after World War II. Evidence of this history remains, although there is now a mix of family dwellings and rental properties for a population of students, artists and the less suburban-inclined. Like many cities, Toronto’s downtown neighbourhoods developed in two ways – either out of the existing grid of the city, or from deliberate urban planning strategies. For example, Regent Park, a social housing project, was built in the 1940s as a
neighbourhood for low-income residents. Saint James Town, a neighbourhood of over 15 high-rise apartment buildings built in the 1960s, provided high density, low income housing in the downtown core. Areas, such as Cabbagetown, Kensington Market and Queen St. West developed organically from the existing mix of residents in their respective communities. The pressures of gentrification are increasingly intense in the Queen St. West and Kensington Market neighbourhoods, a situation that while generating income for the area, threatens the familiarity and the cultural and social diversity of the neighbourhoods. As a reporter for the National Post newspaper wrote,

Like all living things, city neighbourhoods go through natural cycles. They’re born, they have growing pains and identity crises, they have a Golden Age, and then they settle into maturity with varying degrees of dignity. In Toronto, rarely is more than one neighbourhood at its peak at one time. In the 60s, it was Yorkville, in the 70s Cabbagetown, in the 80s, Queen St. West; and in the 90s, it was Little Italy…Basically [the Golden Age] ends where gentrification begins. (George in Hackworth and Rekers, 2005, 7)

The area known as Queen St. West, where the Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach is located was considered a “good address” in the early 1800s. Osgoode Hall, Beverly House, the Georgian Grange at the top of John Street, made this an area sought after by Toronto

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16Regent Park is a neighbourhood located downtown. It was once the centre of the Cabbagetown neighbourhood, and is bounded by Gerrard Street East to the north, River Street to the east, Shuter Street to the south, and Parliament Street to the west. Saint James Town is located in the northeast corner of the downtown area. The neighbourhood covers the area bounded by Sherbourne Street to the west, Howard Street to the north, Parliament Street to the east, and Wellesley Street East to the south. Cabbagetown is a neighbourhood located on the east side of downtown, the original area having been split due to the construction of the Regent St. housing project. It now sits north and south of the Regent Park neighbourhood. Kensington Market’s borders are College Street on the North, Spadina Avenue on the East, Dundas Street West to the South, and Bellevue Avenue to the West. “Queen West” as it is known locally, refers to the collection of neighbourhoods that have developed along and around the Queen Street West thoroughfare from Yonge Street west to, approximately, Bathurst Street.
gentry. By the 1870s, the area became a working-class neighbourhood and the large lots were made into small streets with small frame houses. Immigrant waves followed, and by the 1960s, the area included the mix of single-family homes, greasy spoons, rooming houses, family-run shops and social services that supported the growing population. In the 1970s, because of its affordability and cultural mix, this area became home to artists, students and draft dodgers who appreciated the diversity and large loft living spaces. By the late 1970s, entrepreneurs and urban developers attempted to gentrify the area, causing rents to rise and pushing out lower income people (Whiteson 1982). While gentrification pressures still exist, area residents have struggled to maintain the neighbourhood’s unique character. Artists have contributed substantially to the cultural diversity of neighbourhoods such as these and, as a result, the Queen Street West area has maintained its moniker as one of the cities major artistic hubs. Other neighbourhoods, such as Kensington Market and, most recently, West Queen Street West (the area west of Bathurst Street to Ossington Street) also contribute to this rich history.

*The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* is just one of many projects in the city that use the supportive network of these urban neighbourhoods to frame art projects. For example, *Fly Gallery* on West Queen Street West is operated by artists Scott Carruthers and Tanya Read, who turned the Bay window of their living room into a gallery to provide a 24-hour accessible space that contributes to the cultural life of the street. The setting of *Fly Gallery* is amongst the mix of newly renovated galleries and neighbourhood retail stores typical of the area. The *wade* Collective is a Toronto-based group curated by Toronto artists Sandra Rechio and Christine Pearson. Its mandate is to
open a dialogue involving the arts, the community, and the urban landscape. The group presents interventions and time-based works of public art in the existing network of over one hundred wading pools in Toronto’s system of parks. Because wading pools connect on a neighbourhood scale and to a city-wide network, they offer ideal locations for interventions to spread throughout the city fabric. The projects were intended to engage communities by asking them to participate in the artwork, thereby contributing to the life of the park, the city and the neighbourhood. In 2000, artist James Carl initiated *The Balcony*, which is a venue located on the second floor balcony of his apartment at the intersection of Wales and Augusta Avenues in Toronto's Kensington Market neighbourhood. Artists are invited to create lightweight and weather-resistant graphic works that explore assumptions about public space and public information in an architectural-social context. And, most recently, in 2007, *Nuit Blanche*, an annual, one-night, city-wide celebration of the arts, supported site-specific installations and performances by artists throughout the city’s downtown neighbourhoods. It is this rich urban, social and cultural history of the Queen Street West neighbourhood that Häussler draws on in the realization of the *Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*.

The house at 105 Robinson Street, in which *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* was installed, conveyed the life story of a person whose life moved beyond the constructs of ‘normal’ behaviour. Häussler further complicates the meaning in the work by locating the project at once in the neighbourhood and in a Municipal Archive, where the interface

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between the public space of the street and a private residence is disturbed, where intimate
details of a private life are exposed to public scrutiny and voyeuristic impulses. Häussler
intentionally leaves gaps in Wagenbach’s history, allowing questions to linger, and
meaning to emerge from the viewers’ experiences. In an urban environment where, as
Kwon (2004) suggests, the homogenizing effect of culture further marginalizes
individuals who fall outside the “norm,” Wagenbach carved out a space in which he
could function within society. I suggest that the project raises questions about value
systems in terms of art and artists, and, more broadly, in terms of human behaviour and
notions of citizenship; how we value difference and understand community.

Another key component to Häussler’s work is the distance she creates between
herself, as the artist, and the work. The absence of authorship in the project’s initial
phases, she argues, is an opportunity for viewers to take meaning from the work and draw
their conclusions (Meyer-Stoll 2001). Unlike many early visitors to the site, I arranged
for a tour after the fiction was made public and the authorship revealed. Expecting to feel
cheated of the full impact of the project, I was surprised by the ease with which my
detached observation shifted into total absorption. The visceral impact of the space,
together with the archivist’s account of the site, allowed me to easily drift into the
position of voyeur, picking through family photographs, fingerling dresses and fabrics,
pouring over drawings, scrutinizing sculptures and asking questions of the tour guide in
order to garner information on this unusual and compelling life. As the artist herself
states, The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach is detailed enough to draw visitors into the story
and open enough to be used as a framework that allows visitors to project their own stories onto the theme.""}^{18}

For a panel discussion, held at the Goethe Institute in Toronto following the project’s completion, geographer Amy Lavender suggests, “We imagine cities. We conjure them into being through the stories we tell about them. We do so because the city as we encounter it -- large, chaotic, and hard-edged -- is complex and impenetrable until we chart it into coherence by telling stories about it. When we encounter fragments of other people’s lives -- the tread of their footstep, a flash of colour, a muttered word, and incomprehensible behaviour -- we construct narratives about them, inventing motives, identities, and even histories, in order to fill in the gaps. Jonathan Raban calls this ‘the grammar of urban life.’""}^{19} As an excerpt from the grammar of urban life, The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach, activates the imagination, creating moments that unsettle, inviting the viewer to consider other imaginaries.

Häussler has a history of creating fictional narratives that reveal unusual and, at times, sinister aspects of human behaviour. The art installations she creates take two forms, one in which the general public is integral to the realization of the project, and the other in which they are observers. While living in Germany, she created numerous site-specific installations of fictitious lives. In 1996, Mneme (memory muse) was installed in

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19From the website, The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach, “The City's Vanishing Narratives" <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/AmyLavenderHarris.html> (last consulted January 2008). In September 2006, the Goethe-Institute in Toronto, Ontario, held a discussion forum on Häussler’s project that included, Iris Häussler, curator Rhonda Corvese, philosopher Mark Kingwell, geographer Amy Lavender-Harris, and artist Marcus Schubert.
a rented apartment in a Munich neighbourhood, which was open to the public to explore during the course of the installation. For this piece, the artist constructed a home environment of an unidentifiable individual. Upon entering the apartment, one encountered traces of a former family life through photographs blackened with crayons and stacked in piles, faded spots on the walls where pictures once hung, and the occasional unmarked photo of possible family members. The anonymity of the resident created a distance that allowed for multiple meanings to emerge. In 2003, *Therese* was installed in the guesthouse of the baroque monastery of the Basilica Weingarten, in Weingarten, Germany. In and around the standard furnishings of the guestroom, the artist installed old furniture covered in white bed sheets that concealed the personal belongings and memorabilia of a woman who had seemingly left Germany after the Second World War and never returned. The woman’s thoughts from a period of sixty years, reflecting her situation before emigration and as an immigrant in an unfamiliar world, were condensed into black embroidery on the bed sheets that covered the furniture. Visitors could stay in the room overnight and “live” with the memories of this fictitious character, while the more curious could read the embroidered text or pull the sheets back from the furniture and rummage through drawers to find personal belongings: empty picture frames, small old photographs, clothespins or an embroidery frame. More recently, in 2003, *Monopati* was installed simultaneously in apartments in Munich and Berlin. In Munich, one entered an apartment/workshop where piles of moulds and casts of children’s hands and feet filled every corner of the apartment. The sheer volume of objects, mixed in amongst personal belongings and the remains of everyday life,
suggested a disturbed life, one that functioned on the margins of society. Again, as in her previous works, she raises questions about patterns of behaviour and the concept of normalcy. In Berlin, the apartment overflowed with stored laundry. Reams and reams of folded clothes filled every room. They were neatly stacked or overflowing from inside and from on top of every corner and piece of furniture, apparently organized according to some very particular system of ordering (Häussler 2001).

Clearly, the use of narrative or storytelling is central to Häussler’s work, since it is through the narrative that Häussler reveals emotions, obsessions, compulsions, and other intimate details of private lives. As I mention earlier, Häussler intentionally distances herself from authorship of the work. For example, the fact that *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* was a complete fabrication created by Häussler was revealed only after visitors had toured the site. Critics argued that the work manipulated or intentionally duped the public. David Liss, director of the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art in Toronto, stated, "They abused people's trust and made them feel like fools" (Whtye 2006). The artist, however, argues that the distance allows viewers to imagine and bring meaning to the work, enabling the general non-art viewing public to view it in the “territory of their imagination” (Lacy 1999, 74). Arendt maintains that stories are told from a particular viewpoint and fashion a certain meaning. Such meaning, she suggests, is never definitive, but always open ended, subject to interpretation and telling from another viewpoint. Storytelling is the way that judgements about the past are articulated because they activate plurality (McGowan 1998). It is the possibility of multiple meanings that plurality imparts to help shape identity. By denying
authorship in the initial stages of the project’s presentation, Häussler acknowledges the need for the work to have its own momentum, troubling predictable responses so that the relationship between the “everyday, ritual, mania and art” is open to multiple considerations (Fuchs 2001, 22).

The fictionalizing -- the storytelling -- aspect of the work presents a challenge to straightforward ethical or political analyses. Wagenbach’s life, while a fabrication, makes visible new ways of accounting for citizens who otherwise disappear or become marginalized. The faux ‘discovery’ of Joseph Wagenbach’s legacy parallels real life ‘discoveries’ of outsider artists. In 1972, art historian Roger Cardinal coined the phrase ‘outsider art’ to refer to the work of those individuals living on the margins -- confined or isolated -- including the institutionalized, the naïve artist, the homeless, the ethnic, the inward turning and the self-contained, who were untrained and uninterested in contemporary systems of art production and display. Well-known ‘outsider’ artist, Henry Darger’s extensive collection of watercolour paintings, collages and drawings, were found in his apartment by his landlord after Darger died in 1972 at the age of 80. He had lived a reclusive life for sixty-four years while working as a janitor at various hospitals. Significant, as well, is the work of Swiss artist Adolph Wölfli, who was born in 1864 and died in a mental hospital in Bern in 1930. In 1908, a doctor at the hospital discovered Wölfli’s body of work, which covered a period of thirty years and included hundreds of drawings, writings, musical scores and collages. In France, the French postman, le Facteur Cheval, became famous for his fantastic world of bizarre sculptures made of found objects that he installed in his gardens (Zolberg and Cherbo 1997). The outsider
artist and outsider art has been widely examined and theorized in scholarly research. The outsider artist may, as theorist Pierre Bourdieu suggests, refer to a sociological opposition, between legitimate (dominant) and illegitimate (dominated) positions, which is how cultural domination is perpetuated in the artistic field.²⁰ Or, outsider art may be defined simply by art shown outside the walls of the museum (Heinich in Zolberg and Cherbo 1997). In whatever way one chooses to apply the terminology, the concept of “outsider” raises possibilities for a critical examination of hierarchies of social order in relation to community and citizenship. The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach considers the ‘outsider’ in artistic and in broader socio-cultural contexts -- as artist and as social recluse. By locating this project in a home in an urban neighbourhood, Häussler placed it outside a traditional art world context, connecting it with both art and non-art audiences. In doing so, the work confronted viewers on a local level in the spaces of the everyday, where public encounters with strangers challenge us to consider how we function, interact and engage as a community of separate yet connected individuals.

There are many ways to describe modes of artistic engagement that intervene in public non-art spaces. In the broadest sense, they are either temporary or permanent,

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²⁰Bourdieu (1993) argues that “art and cultural consumption are predisposed consciously and deliberately (or not) to fulfil a function of legitimating social differences” (Bourdieu 1993, 25). This is largely because of the distribution of power in society that is linked to the accumulation of capital (economic, social or cultural) within the fields, within which one operates. It is the differential distribution of power in society that determines its structure. People strive to maximize capital but the capital they are able to maximize is determined by their relation/position within the field and this defines their social opportunities and serves to reproduce class distinctions. It is the notion of the habitus that underlies the ability of agents to maximize capital and determines how one functions within fields of society. This raises questions about Habermas’ universal, inclusive, rational public sphere (where individuals come together as equals), because if, as Bourdieu argues, society functions through power differentials, then there is an assumption of exclusion -- everything is not available to all. It is this concept of the outsider as social outcast that I suggest Häussler examines through the Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach.
passive or active, private art in public spaces, or art in public spaces that can be experienced by the public (Felshin 1995). By virtue of their ‘publicness’ and the complexity of the parameters that define public art, these projects become contested sites, further shaping how they are understood in terms of the creation of meaning and engagement with audience. Deutsche argues that the role of public art isn’t simply to ‘reflect’ social reality, as per traditional art historical paradigms, but to mobilize the work’s context in the production of meaning. The site-specificity of much critical public art incorporates symbolic, social and political meanings, as well as the historical and discursive situation in which audience and artists are located. She goes on to argue that the alteration of the site in site-specific projects requires that the urban space be understood, just as art and art institutions, as a socially constructed space (Deutsche 1992, 159). Lippard, in *The Lure of the Local*, argues that when art is presented in public spaces, or engages with the public realm, it offers a frame or lens through which visual and social experiences are viewed. She goes on to state, “through their work, artists, as storytellers, can relate the local, to broader more familiar narratives” (Lippard 1997, 287).

Kester, however, queries whether public art practices can act as catalysts for new forms of understanding and agency, and whether they can contribute to the discourse around citizenship participation and social responsibility. Or, as he goes on to suggest, do these forms of artistic engagement function, not by addressing a non-art alternative audience, but by speaking to an imaginary viewer, one whose thinking is to be transformed by the experience of the piece? He refers to this viewer as the ‘implied viewer,’ a concept he uses as a way of understanding the artist’s work in alternative sites and the relationship to
its audience (Kester 1998). Kwon argues that, in considering public art projects that reference and mobilize the place of specific communities or community-based concepts, the “interaction between an artist and a given community is not based on a direct, unmediated relationship. Instead, “it is circumscribed within a more complex network of motivations, expectations and projections among all involved.” She states that site-specific art can lead to unearthing of repressed histories and provide greater visibility for marginalized groups and issues. However, she argues, “because of the current socioeconomic order, artists can be instrumental in the (artificial) production and (mass) consumption of difference (for difference sake)” and that siting art in real places can serve this agenda by serving the thematic drive of the artist or the institution (Kwon 2002, 53).

Häussler’s *Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* is a conceptual project driven by the artist’s particular aesthetic. In contrast to Francisco’s project, which is a socially motivated work that directly addresses the citizen in the urban neighbourhood, Häussler engages with community and the citizen through the art object. By incorporating aspects of the local history of the neighbourhood into the narrative of the project, Häussler is able to tap into shared history and public memory of its citizens and, through the work, raise questions about value systems that extend beyond the artworld and into the social realm, examining social hierarchies that mediate relationships to the ‘Other’ in society. She also introduces a relational element to the way we formulate meaning in our daily lives. Art historian Irit Rogoff (2002) argues that meanings are created in many different ways, through a range of encounters and interactions. She articulates this via the notion of a
‘WE’ that speaks to collectivity and mutualities beyond shared categories of class, taste, political or sexual orientations. In these instances, she argues that another form of ‘WE’ is produced in the process of viewing, and that this shifts the very nature of meaning and its relation to the notion of displayed visual culture. She maintains that we inhabit the spaces of art in various forms of collectivity, and in the process produce new relations between viewers and spaces rather than between viewers and objects. This suggests that there is more to the production of meaning in the spaces of contemporary art than the art object; there is also the social. Her interpretation decentralizes the notion of the art object as central to the production of meaning in the spaces of contemporary art. She states that by looking at the notion of ‘WE’ as central, meaning is never produced in isolation or through isolating processes, but rather is produced through intricate webs of connectedness, through relations with other people and through the temporality of the event or display -- artworks function as fields of possibility for different audiences in different cultural circumstances to produce significances.

Häussler’s practice is a form of artistic engagement in an urban environment that has its roots in the genre of temporary site-specific public art. Within that genre, which includes community-based art, activist, and some forms of installation art, the location of the work in a non-art venue is vital. This is not only because the contextual meaning is specific to the geographical and social aspects of the site (public/private), but also because the site has a relationship to the local audience. Phillips states that public art is public because it is a manifestation that takes its ideas from the idea of public as a place of contest and transition. As such, it should not be expressing some universal message
but should be using its visual language to explore temporal conditions of the collective (Phillips 1992).

In order to illustrate her argument, Phillips mobilizes the work of American artist Kryzsio Wodiczko. Wodiczko’s large-scale projections onto public monuments and buildings demonstrate that the temporality of public art provides flexibility and adjustability that allows one to explore and respond critically to current events and values.\(^{21}\) As well, Lacy (1989) argues that a public art practice should include a participatory element (both physically and intellectually). She states that, “in the fractured space of our contemporary surround, integration is a rejuvenating act, and artmaking a metaphoric ground for the examination of public, private and mutual accountability” (Lacy 1989, 300). Through this process, she argues, an informed and engaged public is a potentiality. I suggest that by temporarily embedding itself in the sociality of the neighbourhood, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* engages with the public to raise questions about art world systems and the ways that they determine how we look at art and assess its value. As well, it raises questions about how we assign value in a broader sense, in the public realm, where values, ideologies and power are exercised and where, citizens meet one and other, exchange opinions, and where their differences as well as commonalities can emerge. Artist and art historian Carol Becker mobilizes

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\(^{21}\) Yúdice presents a description of Wodiczko’s work in his essay on *InSite* 2000. The work consisted of projections of the talking heads of six female maquiladora workers onto the dome of the Centro Cultural Tijuana. The artist describes the work as providing visibility, through advanced technology, to women who worked in Tijuana’s maquiladora industry, bringing into public space the privatized suffering of women that was controlled by class and gender in Mexico. The piece “politicized what remains suppressed due to the strong public/private divide in Mexico,” and as he further states, “it served to open up public space to those in an undemocratic society did not have access” (Yudice 2003, 322).
Adorno in her analysis of public art interventions, arguing that while art may not solve social problems, it can “bear witness, articulate concerns and offer a direction for change.” She posits that people gravitate to art because “art is the negative knowledge of the actual world,” and that humans need to find the hidden side of their own reality mirrored or elevated in order to see their relationship to the world and to pierce through its illusions (Adorno in Becker 1997, 67). Art critic Andrea Carson describes Häussler’s project as a hyper-real recreation that destabilizes the perception of truth by showing one reality against another (Carson 2006). This, I suggest, compels the viewer to consider how we, as a society, value in citizens who fall outside the norm.

With the Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach, Häussler leads us through an imaginary yet convincing story of one man’s life, revealing intricacies, both joyous and tragic, of a private life in a public forum, challenging the viewer to consider personal limits and possibilities in the way we engage with community and notions of citizenship. In the city, the neighbourhood imaginary emerges as a conceptual space where artists can examine those systems and ideologies from which social values emerge. By confronting the viewer in the public forum with the familiar, in juxtaposition with the markedly unusual, Häussler’s “plea for the unobserved” is realized (Häussler 2001, 90).
Figure 6: Iris Häussler, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, front yard of 105 Robinson St, 2006; installation. Collection: the artist. Image: website <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/>

Figure 7: Iris Häussler, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, back yard at 105 Robinson St, 2006; installation. Collection: the artist. Image: website <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/>
Figure 8: Iris Häussler, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, living room in 105 Robinson St, 2006; installation. Collection: the artist Image: website <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/>

Figure 9: Iris Häussler, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, kitchen in 105 Robinson St, 2006; installation. Collection: the artist Image: website <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/>

Figure 10: Iris Häussler, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, studio/back porch in 105 Robinson St, 2006; installation. Collection: the artist Image: website <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/>

Figure 12: Iris Häussler, *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach*, woman’s bedroom in 105 Robinson St, 2006; installation. Collection: the artist. Image: website <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/>

Chapter 4

Various Artists: The Swamp Ward Window

The time of public art involves questions of intimacy and immediacy -- those transactions when art becomes part of an individual’s life, thoughts and ideas. These moments of connectivity if elusive, imprecise and incalculable, enable people to envision their lives within a community to see and seek some equation between private interest and public good. (Phillips 2003, 131)

Located in the front porch of my home in a downtown neighbourhood in Kingston, Ontario, *The Swamp Ward Window* was launched in 2001 as a venue for temporary, location-oriented art projects, running from one to two months in duration. The house borders on a busy section of Bagot Street, which is a direct route in and out of the downtown core. As a result, there is a large and diverse mix of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Because of the porch’s proximity to the street, it functions as a transitional space, mediating between the privacy of the home and the publicity of everyday life on the street. The art projects that are presented in *The Swamp Ward Window* build on the plethora of installation-based, interventionist art practices that are temporary and site-specific, relational, participatory or performative. Taking place in marginal or non-traditional spaces, practices such as this are motivated by a desire to move art into public spaces in order to engage with new audiences and publics. Deployed in the public domain, these kinds of art projects share concerns with social actions but, as Patricia Phillips (1999) suggests, are differentiated by an aesthetic in
which the conceptual takes precedence over the anecdotal to encourage response and ignite ideas.

As stated in the introduction, I use the neighbourhood imaginary as a conceptual framework to facilitate a critical examination of *The Swamp Ward Window*, through both the built structure as a venue for the presentation of art and through the art projects produced for the space. I suggest that forms of artistic engagement such as these address both the physical and conceptual space of the neighbourhood to engage with the values, culture and politics that merge to articulate a civic life.

The location of the venue in a home, within the geographical boundaries of a local neighbourhood, grounds it in the vernacular of a particular place. Lucy Lippard describes place as the “resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar” (Lippard 1997, 7). According to Lippard, place is the external world mediated through subjective experience; it is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere (Lippard 1997). She argues that the distinctions of local difference, and the specificities of place have been subsumed, homogenized and made generic via the abstraction of space to better accommodate the expansion of capitalism under neo-liberal strategies. A sense of place, she suggests, is missing in a world where migration and forced relocations have resulted in difficulties for people in locating themselves (Lippard in Kwon 2002). Miwon Kwon, however, maintains that Lippard clings to a nostalgic past where a vernacular, place-bound site-specificity facilitates a slower “non-urban sociality…. of face-to-face exchanges” as the only way to recover the groundlessness and loss of self. The problem with this analysis, she argues, is that it doesn’t account for the
production of difference as a fundamental activity of capitalism necessary for its expansion. The desire for difference ensures our commitment to “pay for it and indicates the power it has over us” (Kwon 2002, 159). As Dolores Hayden points out, “places build public memory that coheres in complex ways, and [that] an individual’s experience intertwines with the sense of place and the politics of space” (Hayden 1995, 42). Clearly, the effect of globalization on cities and on neighbourhoods complicates the meaning of place in relationship to identity and citizenship. However, as global networks of exchange proliferate and the borderless global neighbourhood encroaches, the local neighbourhood, imparts, through traditions, familiar markers and sociality, a sense of belonging that shapes identity (Forrest 2003). Yet, neighbourhoods can also be places where traditions and values produce regressive tendencies that generate alienation. In my analysis, the neighbourhood is a fluid concept, where the interplay of economic, political, social, and cultural factors suggest multiple meanings of community and citizenship.

In order to theorize the relationship between civic life and artistic forms of engagement in unconventional public spaces, it is important to consider The Swamp Ward Window as both the physical structure and the art projects produced for the space. The interaction between the site, the artwork, and the public generates the possibility for art to communicate the relationship of “aesthetic ideas to an ongoing renewal of public life” (Phillips 1999, 5). I suggest these elements are vital to a critical examination of local art practices and global systems of connectivity and citizenship.

*The Swamp Ward Window* is located in a house on a section of Bagot Street, three blocks north of Princess Street, Kingston’s main street. The moniker refers to a period in
the area’s history when the shoreline was a swamp, before it was land filled to create usable space. It is three blocks from a number of small parks and two doors from a family-run corner store, which functions as a neighbourhood hub for residents to gather and chat over coffee, and purchase their weekly supply of lottery tickets. For many years an annual Swamp Ward Festival was held for area residents in one of several neighbourhood church halls. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the area was primarily a working class district for new immigrants who worked in the shipbuilding and locomotive industries along the waterfront. Presently, because of its affordable housing, cultural and social amenities and proximity to the downtown core, the area is becoming populated with younger middle-income families. Unlike areas in larger cities such as Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal, this Kingston neighbourhood has been in a slow process of gentrification for over twenty years, and as a result there is a diverse social and cultural mix. Social housing blends with single-family dwellings, renovated small and mid-sized homes and a few upscale condominiums and townhouses. Social service agencies include the Food Bank, the local Boys and Girls Club, the city’s Social Services Department, a women’s shelter and a municipal retirement home. There is an active street life that includes legitimate and illegitimate businesses’ among them, bootleggers and prostitutes, alongside corner stores, auto-mechanics, and hair salons. As well, there are a range of sports and cultural facilities, including hockey rinks, community centres, baseball diamonds, artist studios and the only artist-run centre in the city. And, on a section of undeveloped waterfront, are make-shift shelters erected by the area’s homeless population. The social dynamic of the area provides a context in which The
Swamp Ward Window projects can engage with a diverse audience and the sociality of the neighbourhood.

The Swamp Ward Window venue is delineated by the space in and around the front porch of a typical neighbourhood residence. The porch consists of six windows containing sixty-eight mullioned windowpanes. The windows face the street on the north, south, and east, and the porch sits eight feet from the sidewalk that borders on the street. A small display box next to the driveway provides a description of each project. Because direct access to the inside of the porch is not permitted, the projects produced for The Swamp Ward Window are visible only from street level. As a result, projects include sound, time-based, and sculptural installations inside the porch, on the exterior surface of the porch, and on the front lawn. The projects disrupt the rhythm of the street, inviting passersby to engage on both conceptual and concrete levels, insofar as they interact with the work both intellectually and physically (in the routines of their daily lives). As a permanent structure, The Swamp Ward Window is embedded in the fabric of the streetscape much like any other veranda, porch or balcony in the neighbourhood and, therefore, has the possibility of reaching a wider and more diverse audience. As a result, the art projects engage with the public to varying degrees and on various levels. To assist in my analysis I describe a selection of art projects that were mounted in The Swamp Ward Window over the course of five years from 2002 to 2007.

In January 2002, Montreal artist Ann Ramsden’s project entitled Winter Garden was mounted on the exterior surface of The Swamp Ward Window (figs. 14-16). The installation consisted of an array of colourful artificial flowers that circled the windows
of the porch. The flowers were recycled from a project entitled *Garden*, which the artist had installed the previous year in the ditch surrounding a Murney Tower on Kingston’s waterfront. The project was part of the exhibition *Museopathy* that took place in Kingston in the summer of 2001.\(^{22}\) Planted in a way that allowed them to blend with existing vegetation, the artificiality of the flowers in *Garden*, was obscured. However, in *Winter Garden*, at *The Swamp Ward Window* artificiality was on display, even celebrated. As the artist wrote, “It is an artwork to be experienced over time by people who live and walk about in this neighbourhood. It looks backward to the summer and forward to spring” (Ramsden, 2001). Malcolm Miles (2000) suggests that changes to architectural spaces through decoration or physical alteration mark difference, leaving traces or footprints throughout the city. Recreating a garden in an unlikely location, (on the vertical façade of the porch) disturbs the familiar and presents a playful, yet critical comment on cultural and social markers that indicate difference.

Kingston artist Craig Leonard’s work, *for*, which took place in September 2002, was an intervention on the front lawn of *The Swamp Ward Window* (figs. 17-18). In the project, Leonard critically examined cultural and social assumptions through the familiar image of the real estate sign. The installation consisted of a typical real estate sign painted in the style and colours of a well-known local real estate company. In the center

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\(^{22}\) *Museopathy*, which was organized through the Agnes Etherington Art Centre by curator Jan Allen, took place over the summer of 2001. This project was a multi-site exhibition that capitalized on Kingston's mix of specialist museums (military, political, marine and prison). Project curators Jennifer Fisher and Jim Drobnick asked ten artists to install works in local museum sites that engaged with the historical and social aspects of site. Ramsden’s piece was installed in the ditch surrounding the Murney Tower, which is a Martello tower located on the waterfront in Kingston, Ontario. It is a small defensive structure that dates back to 1846. It is 40 feet high (with two floors) and typically had a garrison of one officer and 25 men who used the tower as both a residence and as a defensive structure.
of the sign the word “for” was prominently featured. Below, on the lower portion, a series of familiar phrases that began with the word ‘for’ were inserted. Idioms such as “pete’s sake,” “god’s sake,” “all the tea in China,” “a dog’s age,” “the birds” replaced the familiar text found on a real estate text. As well, the artist’s phone number was included for people who wanted to make inquiries. The artist stated, “a sign is a meaningful expression of information, yet meaningful only insofar as it is culturally recognizable. Signs denoting the same information can be verbal, non-verbal or both. While retaining the ‘significance’ of the sign by the list of related idioms, the work unsettles the common verbal and non-verbal elements of a sign that we know to be as familiar as, well, the house next door” (Leonard, 2001).

Toronto artist Sarindar Dhaliwal’s project, They Call the Wind Virago, was installed inside the porch in November of 2003. On each of the sixty-eight mullioned windowpanes, the artist hung a set of small curtains in a range of tropical colours including saffron yellow, crimson red, tangerine, fuchsia and Hunter’s green. In vinyl letters on the surface of each pane, where the curtains parted, was a woman’s name and date (figs. 19-20). Taken from archival records, the names identified tropical hurricanes and the year of their occurrence. The practice of using women’s names exclusively for hurricanes ended in 1978 when names of both genders began to be used.23 Dhaliwal

23 An early example of the use of a woman's name for a storm was in the novel, "Storm," by George R. Stewart, published by Random House in 1941. During World War II this practice became widespread in weather map discussions among forecasters, especially Air Force and Navy meteorologists who plotted the movements of storms over the Pacific Ocean. In 1953, the United States abandoned a confusing two-year old plan to name storms by a phonetic alphabet. That year, the United States began using female names for storms. The practice of naming hurricanes solely after women came to an end in 1978 when men and women's names were included in the Eastern North Pacific storm lists. In 1979, male and female names
critically engages with this history, using the domestic space of the home to allude to patriarchal practices that equate the feminine with uncontrollable natural acts of destruction and devastation. *Call the Wind Virago* presented a feminist history, one that belied the playful aesthetic that the palette of tropical colours suggested, and one that resonated with a larger social history.

In May 2004, Kingston artist Jan Allen’s project *Neighbourhood Watch* was mounted inside the front porch of *The Swamp Ward Window*. *Neighbourhood Watch* consisted of a 10x3x3 foot platform that sat level with the lower edge of the windowsills. On the platform, a selection of chairs was positioned to face the street. The project began with a one-day performance, in which passers-by and invited guests were invited to participate. Sitting on chairs in the window as “observers” of street activity from inside the porch, they also became the “observed” by the neighbourhood residents congregating on the sidewalk or passing by in the course of their daily activities (figs. 21-23). The empty chairs remained in the window for the duration of the exhibition. *Neighbourhood Watch* can be understood in relation to the Neighbourhood Watch program that originated in the United States in the 1970s, and that was introduced in Canada in the 1980s. Conceptualized as a citizen action initiative, it was designed to “reduce neighbourhood crime through education of citizens on how to protect themselves, their property, their families, and their neighbourhood.” The program was an opportunity to demonstrate collective responsibility for the well-being of fellow citizens through surveillance and

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24From the website, Neighbourhood Watch Registry, [http://www.neighbourhoodwatchregistry.com](http://www.neighbourhoodwatchregistry.com) (last consulted September 2007).
action. In the current climate of fear and paranoia that has arisen globally in the wake of the World Trade Center collapse and that has been exacerbated by global networks of exchange, Allen’s *Neighbourhood Watch* critically explored these ideas, turning notions of surveillance and watchfulness back on themselves, raising questions around larger issues that drive more invasive uses of surveillance. As Allen stated, “it comments on the proliferation of electronic surveillance; devices of remote recording with their lack of nuanced context of spaces” (Allen, 2004).

Newfoundland artist Mark Prier presented a one-day, interactive performative installation entitled *Nomadsland* in September of 2007. Prier created *Nomadsland* in 2003 as an independent state of mind, a spatial conceptualization of a state with an evolving constitution; responsive to the changing needs of its citizenry. The intervention involved setting up a passport office on the front lawn and in the driveway, which consisted of a tent (the consulate), a sandwich board sign with the state symbol, a flag, and the necessary materials and equipment required to issue passports (camera, typewriter, laminating machine) (figs. 24-26). Area residents were able to meet with “Alex” (the bureaucrat responsible for issuing passports) to complete an application and receive a passport. Alternatively, individuals could obtain their passports through the *Nomadsland* website. *Nomadsland*’s Charter is transnational, and in addition to other objectives, stipulates that citizens “think globally and act locally,” “have the right to multiple citizenships,” “the right to a sustainable and renewable commons,” and the

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“right to have hope.” Prier’s project moves from city to city, manifesting in real places, in specific localities. Kwon refers to this as a nomadic practice, one that characterizes the reality of present day nomadic lifestyles brought on by the globalizing effects of deterritorializations and technologies, ease of mobility and the search for meaning and belonging (Kwon, 2002). She suggests that “the deterritorialization of place has produced liberating effects, displacing the strictures of place-bound identities with the fluidity of a migratory model, introducing possibilities of the production of multiple identities, allegiances and meanings, based not on normative conformities but on the nonrational convergences forged by chance encounters and circumstances” (Kwon 2002, 165). In the context of globalization, then, projects such as Prier’s Nomadsland demonstrate how artists are examining citizenship and community in relation to mobility, place and identity.

Since the 1960s, art practices that take place outside traditional art venues in public spaces have gained momentum on an international scale, resulting in a spectrum of methodologies and forms that include permanent sculpture, interdisciplinary art forms, nomadic practices, ephemeral temporary interventions and performative works. The range of work that emerges from this genre of artistic production, in terms of content and media, together with the publicness of the locations, has the potential to produce multiple meanings, sparking controversy and debate, and demonstrating the limits and possibilities of public forms of art. Locally, in Kingston, there is a history of public art that echoes

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26 Ibid
27 The “consulate” was installed in various local communities including, Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, Ashford, Kent, United Kingdom, and Kingston, Ontario, Canada.
similar trends in other cities. Publicly-commissioned monuments and permanent sculpture, institution-driven site-specific projects, independent curatorial and artist projects and community-based initiatives map out a context in which *The Swamp Ward Window* projects resonate with the artistic culture of the city. As well, Kingston is no stranger to controversy surrounding issues of public art. For example, the controversy surrounding a piece of public sculpture entitled *Pollution* that took place in the 1970s parallels similar international cases. Artworks such as Henry Moore’s, *The Archer*, in Toronto City Hall’s Nathan Phillips Square, Michael Snow’s, *Flight Stop*, an installation of Canada geese in Toronto’s Eaton Centre, or Richard Serra’s *Titled Arc* in New York City demonstrate the difficulties that can transpire when art enters the public domain.

In Kingston, July 2006, an article in the editorial section of the local newspaper, the Kingston Whig-Standard, described a piece of sculpture on Kingston’s waterfront as a “butt-ugly piece of construction garbage that at one time, in that age of sweet hippie

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28In 1966, Henry Moore’s *The Archer* was unveiled in front of Toronto’s City Hall. Initially, the city council refused to spend the $120,000 asking price for the work, igniting a now familiar controversy over whether spending money on public art constituted a necessary cultural expenditure or an expensive frill. In the end, the mayor set up a public fund to raise money for the piece from private donors (<http://www.Toronto.ca/archives/city_hall_art.htm> last consulted January 2008). In 1979, Toronto artist Michael Snow took the Toronto Eaton Centre, a large privately owned shopping mall in downtown Toronto, to court over what he considered a violation of his work *Flight Stop*. The sculpture, which was purchased by the Eaton Centre, was installed in 1981. The multi-part artwork consisted of a several of cast Canada geese suspended from the ceiling of the mall’s foyer. During the Christmas season, the geese were decorated with red ribbons around their necks, incorporating them into the commercialism of the festive season. This intervention was seen by the artist as a violation of his work and reputation and sparked a precedent-setting court case, in which it was ruled that that even though the centre owned the geese, the ribbons infringed on the artists’ moral rights (<http://www.deathbycopyright.ca/index.php?/archives/ last consulted January 2008>). In the United States, Richard Serra’s *Titled Arc*, a large minimalist abstract work, which was commissioned by the U.S. General Services Administration in 1979 for the Federal Plaza in downtown Manhattan in New York City, was installed on the plaza in 1981, only to be removed in 1989 after five years of public law suits. Critics at the time regarded Serra’s sculpture as ugly, brutal, without any artistic merit, an impediment to security and a potential target of terrorist bomb attacks. In the court case that ensued, it was described as a self-interested piece that had no regard for the public space or the users of the site (Kwon, 2002).
naiveté of the late 1960s and 1970s, could be passed off as art” (Langmuir 2006, 5). The article dredged up a 30-year old controversy that surrounded a piece of publicly commissioned, permanent sculpture entitled Pollution, located on Kingston’s waterfront. The controversy arose out of a public art project, inspired by a local art patron, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the City of Kingston. The plan was to create a sculpture park on a stretch of the waterfront near Queen’s University and the Kingston General Hospital. Artworks would be commissioned from the governments that had played a significant role in Kingston’s history, including the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the federal governments of Britain, France, and Canada. This was to culminate in six-large scale sculptures along the waterfront. The group was successful in obtaining support from the Provincial governments of Ontario and Quebec, but by the summer of 1973, the project was downsized due to lack of funding from other sources. Eventually, it included only two public artworks, Pollution by Quebec artist Yvon Cozic (a gift from the Quebec Government), and Time by Toronto artist Kosso Eloul (from the Province of Ontario). Pollution consists of two large-scale sewer pipes, painted green, out of which spewed a mass of orange, pink and yellow effluent, functioning as a critique of the lack of government attention to environmental issues. The public reaction to the works triggered a heated and prolonged debate in the media. While Pollution received its share of minor vandalism, typical of much art in outdoor public places, it was two years later, in October 1975, when three men, two university students and one intern at Kingston General Hospital, made a major intervention. In what they called a “prank,” the

29 Telephone interview with Michael Davies, July 2006.
men “transformed” the sewer pipes into oversized replicas of 7-up and Coke soft drink cans. One newspaper account of the event, which was carried out at night, accused the police of complicity because they did little to stop the act of vandalism. A reporter noted that, while names were taken, no efforts were made to stop the progress of the men (Bainbridge, 1975). While clearly the politics of the 1970s Canadian nationalism, in combination with issues of taste and culture, contributed to the public outcry, what is significant for my analysis is the way that art in public spaces is able to generate debate and civic engagement.

In addition to these citizen-initiated art projects, there are institutionally driven, temporary site-specific projects such as Museopathy, which was curated through the Agnes Etherington Art Centre and took place over the summer of 2001. This project was a multi-site exhibition that capitalized on Kingston's mix of specialist museums histories (military, political, marine and prison) by inviting artists to install works that engaged with the historical and social aspects of the sites. As well, Art in the Streets, a program initiated in 2003 by the Modern Fuel Artist Run Centre, is a public art initiative that facilitates the production of works meant to engage with a local public. Taking place in storefronts or unconventional public sites, this program features artworks in visual and time-based media that engage with local community politics to stimulate interest from non-art and art audiences. For example, in 2005 the project, Parking Art in Parking Lots, a co-presentation with the Union Gallery, featured site-specific interventions by professional and student artists that transformed parking spaces into dynamic spaces, challenging ideas and concepts concerning our relationship with the "parking lot"
(Battson, 2004). Organized in 2003 by Ian Hodkinson through the Kingston Arts Council, the KISS project (Kingston InSightS) was a community-based initiative designed to develop community awareness through art and increase awareness of art through the community. Local professional artists were chosen to collaborate with various community groups to produce multidisciplinary, photo-based expressions that emphasized the diversity of communities in Kingston and their relationship to the fabric of the city. And, on a national level, in Toronto in the late 1990s and early 2000s, temporary art projects such as offsite@Toronto, a project curated by Kym Pruess in 1998, included interventions by sixteen artists that took place throughout downtown Toronto. Similarly, artist and architect Adrian Blackwell’s participatory interventions, Light Net (2004), Car Pool (2005) and Model for a Public Space (2000, 2006) altered existing public spaces, opening up private enclosures to the city and in doing so produced new locations for collective action and public discourse. In Vancouver, British Columbia, artist Kathleen Ritter’s curatorial project Expect Delays, which took place in 2003, was a series of public “infiltration” works that engaged in daily life to critically investigate the social conventions, pedestrian movement and regulation of public space. As well, there are artist-curated spaces such as Newfoundland artist Mark Prier’s foyer gallery space,}

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30 offsite@toronto was a series of urban interventions by sixteen artists and artists groups that took place in various locations throughout Toronto in the fall of 1998, outside the conventional gallery site. The publication Accidental Audiences: Urban Interventions by Artists, is a publication that followed the project as a continuation of conversations around interventionist practices. Adrian Blackwell is a Toronto-based artist and architect whose socially engaged art projects open up private enclosures to the city. Recent works such as Light Net (2004), Car Pool (2005) and Model for a Public Space (2000, 2006) produced new locations for collective action and public discourse. From website, Critical Spatial Practice, <http://criticalspatialpractice.blogspot.com/2006/09/adrian-blackwell.html> (last consulted January 2008).

entitled 312, which is an alternative video exhibition space housed in the small foyer of his apartment in Cornerbrooke, Newfoundland. Showcasing one channel video work on a television, 312 offer visitors an intimate experience -- a comfortable chair, a set of headphones and video art. And, as mentioned in chapter two, there is artist James Carl’s *Balcony* project, which is located on the outdoor balcony railing of his apartment in Toronto, and *Fly Gallery*, a storefront window gallery in an artist’s apartment in Toronto.

*The Swamp Ward Window* projects build on these local forms of artistic engagement, and examine similar issues of community and citizenship through the sociality of the neighbourhood and the “work” of art. In doing so, these projects engage actively with the public sphere and a more careful consideration of this relationship is helpful for my analysis. As Arendt (1958) suggests, the public sphere is a place from which a concept of community and identity emerges through an engagement with others in the plurality of society. And Rosalyn Deutsche maintains that the term public sphere designates either a set of institutions through which the state is held accountable to citizens, or, a space of discursive interaction, where the “public” emerges in the course of the discussion (Deutsche 1992, 39). In considering how art in unconventional sites engages with the public sphere, Malcolm Miles concept of “zones of transition” in relation to urban planning is useful to consider.

Zones of transition are built spaces that exist within cities and neighbourhoods, and are a means by which citizens distinguish themselves from each other. Miles’

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32From the website, 312, <http://www.312.ca/about312.htm> (last consulted January 2008).
discussion analyzes the modernist utopian ideal, and suggests that the modernist project imagined a better world through an objective, rational engineered project. He argues that the public realm, is disappearing in new urban planning models because there has been a privileging of concern for the design of public space over domestic space. This, he argues, is problematic because it creates a binary categorization of space as either public or private and ignores a third area of transitional spaces (Miles, 2000). In the modernist model, the design of public space became a “badge of exclusivity,” demanding a separation of concept from experience that resulted in a functionalization of space. This led to a top-down model of problem-solving, providing little opportunity for citizen consultation. To further complicate this, he suggests that public space today, in the era of globalization, is increasingly encroached upon by privatized space. Corporate space subsumes public space under the auspice of creating public space. “The Sony Plaza, in New York City, or Hay’s Galleria, in London UK, or malls that replace main streets with fantasy filled palaces of consumption, are examples of pseudo-public space owned and controlled by corporations” (Miles 2000, 256). Miles suggests that the only spaces in which change can occur are in the cracks of the dominant society, the spaces where assumptions can be challenged. He describes these cracks as zones of transition that include architectural spaces such as balconies, porches, shared courtyards, or allotments and caravan parks. Places where people produce their space, he suggests, are influential in forming patterns of sociation (Miles, 2000). This form of cultural intervention is what dwellers do to produce their own space, “the architectural everyday” (Harris and Berke in Miles 2000, 259). These acts alter architectural spaces through decoration or physical
alterations that mark difference and, while collective or plural, are changeable and are everywhere in urban environments -- in neighbourhoods -- leaving traces or footprints throughout the city. Transitional spaces such as balconies and porches, for example, serve multiple purposes. They are used as social spaces from which to converse with other balcony dwellers or people in the street, and as domestic places to hang washing, store fruit, hang birdcages, or decorate with potted plants and lights (Miles, 2000). Rather than confront power as a bloc, these activities diffuse and translate it through proximate relations, creating “a ground for the process of becoming by being amidst others, a form of civic engagement that Arendt describes as the possibility for freedom” (Arendt in Miles 2000, 259). These are mutable spaces produced by citizens as sites of engagement, and as cross over points between the public and the private -- between the street and the domestic interior -- where, I suggest, the limitations and possibilities of community emerge (Miles, 2000).

Theorist Michel de Certeau proposes a system of strategies and tactics to manage how we engage with the public spaces in the city, in the course of our everyday routines. In his essay “Walking in the City,” he describes "the city" as a concept produced by the strategic maneuvering of governments, corporations, and other institutional bodies, who manage our movements through maps, pathways, roads, zoning, and urban development policies that make the city appear as a unified whole. However, if we observe people in their everyday activities, on the street, we can observe their movement in ways that he calls “tactical” because, he argues, how we move through the city can never be fully determined by organizing bodies. We take shortcuts, meander aimlessly, and take
detours, both consciously and subconsciously. This influences what we see, whom we encounter, and gives us a means to adapt the power of the city to our own needs (de Certeau, 2000). As citizens, how we live in the world -- the choices we make, the people we interact with, the way we decorate our homes, cut our grass, and traverse the neighbourhood -- are tactics we use to engage with the spaces we inhabit. I suggest that *The Swamp Ward Window*, as a porch, occupies a transitional space where artistic expression articulates with the public sphere to disturb the order of daily life and the homogenizing effects of urban planning models.

*The Swamp Ward Window* projects intervene in public spaces, connecting with a local audience. In terms of content, however, the projects avoid direct reference to local history; rather they express ideas that, while performed locally, resonate translocally, intersecting with the global through a shared condition of locality. Doreen Massey argues that the local is a space of the intimate, the familiar, the near, and the embodied, separate from the more abstracted global space, which is hegemonic, virtual and encroaching (Massey in Amin 2004). In contrast, Ash Amin sees cities and regions as immersed in global networks of organization, which include the everyday transnational flow of ideas, and the growth of translocal networks of influence. He suggests, therefore, that there exists “a relational reading of place that works with the ontology of flow, connectivity and multiple geographical expression” (Amin 2004, 34): “Cities and regions are spatial formations and, as such, they are temporary placements of ever moving material and immanent geographies, ‘hauntings’ of things that have moved on but have left their mark” (Thrift in Amin 2004, 34). Such discussions on space suggest that, in the
current era of globalization, with expanding technologies and mass mediated communications, a concept of place is complex. Neither just transnational nor just local, rather, it is both -- a fluid concept that creates the potential for new meanings and formations to emerge (see Amin 2004, Hayden 1995, Massey 1994, Lippard 1997, Meyrowitz 1990, Urry 2002).

Geographer Joshua Meyrowitz suggests that in the postmodern society of globalism, a weakening of the link between physical and social place, as technologies expand, has resulted in neighbours become partial strangers, and strangers, through electronic mass mediated communications, become neighbours. “This notion of connectivity to the world as your neighbourhood, he claims, is insubstantial -- it is too big to fathom” (Meyrowitz 1990, 130). *The Swamp Ward Window* is a transitional space from which there is possibility for art to engage on a human scale with an everyday audience. As an unconventional space that borders on public space, forms of artistic engagement such as *The Swamp Ward Window* make assumptions about their effect on the public they proposes to engage. As I mention in earlier chapters, both Kwon (2003) and Kester (1998) suggest that artwork produced in the alternative sector doesn’t necessarily address an alternative audience and, as a result, only functions by speaking to an imaginary spectator, one who-is-to-be-transformed by the experience of the artwork, making the reception of these works rhetorical. Kester cites the work of US artists Karen Finley and Barbara Kruger to make his point, arguing that the overly spectacle-like nature of Finley’s performances or Kruger’s installations in public spaces turn critical explorations of consumerism and codes of masculinity into products for consumer
consumption, where the audience viewing them may have views that oppose the artist or be those people the artist is targeting as the victimizer. Phillips, however, argues that art deployed in public “accepts the indispensability, if undefineability of an audience” (Phillips 1999, 5). If the “public” in public art is considered, not just as an audience for the art, but also as the body of ideas and subjects that artists choose to concentrate on, then public art cannot be examined for its broadness of communication, for its popular reception or its sensitive siting (Phillips 1992, 332). From its position on the margins of the contemporary discourse, art in public spaces can frame and foster a discussion on community and culture (Phillips 1995).

The neighbourhood is where people live and perform the activities that structure and order their daily lives, where difference emerges and where civic identity is shaped. In the neighbourhood, The Swamp Ward Window is a familiar local marker. It is embedded in the sociality of the neighbourhood and the daily flow of people through it, bringing contemporary art into the public domain, grounding it in the present, and in the everyday, in a similar manner to the way rituals and traditions mark occasions such as birth, death and anniversaries, embedding them in local history and in public memory.

There is, as Massey suggests, an intimacy and familiarity that emerges when people live in a particular place. Recalling Amin’s (2004) argument that cities and regions are

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33Kruger’s work, as described by Miles, “uses images and captions of advertising to rupture the spaces and codes of masculinity and consumerism” (Miles 2000, 259). Kester, however, argues that the language used in critical analysis of Kruger’s work, such as “positioning the viewer” and “linguistically place[ing]” the viewer, speaks to a naïve, ill-informed audience and is counter to what the work proposes to do (Kester 1998, 122 123). In her work, Finley probes themes of the body, sexual abuse and violence, AIDS, suicide, female sexuality, and American politics. While she has received significant critical and popular acclaim, she has also managed to upset groups on the left, from gallery managers to the National Organization of Women, which rejected her “The Virgin Mary Is Pro-Choice” design for a T-shirt. As the artist herself states, “within politics there is a boundary….I found that boundary” (Potier 2002).
immersed in global networks of organization, which include the everyday transnational flow of ideas, and the growth of translocal networks of influence, I suggest that the boundaries between local and global are mutable, and cohere in ways that allow multiple meanings to emerge. These “moments of connectivity if elusive, imprecise and incalculable, enable people to envision their lives within a community to see and seek some equation between private interest and public good” (Phillips 2003, 131). The Swamp Ward Window mediates the space between the intimacy of the private home and the public space of the street, thereby creating possibilities for artists to engage with the public and critically examine the limitations and possibilities of neighbourhood as a space from which new meanings of community and civic engagement emerge.
Figure 14: Anne Ramsden, *Winter Garden* 2002; plastic flowers. Installation. Collection: the artist. Image: Jocelyn Purdie, 448 Bagot St.


Figure 16: Anne Ramsden, *Winter Garden* 2002; plastic flowers (detail). Collection: the artist. Image: Jocelyn Purdie, 448 Bagot St.
Figure 17: Craig Leonard, for, 2002; installation. Collection: the artist. Image: Jocelyn Purdie, 448 Bagot St.

Figure 18: Craig Leonard, for, 2002; installation. Collection: the artist. Image: Jocelyn Purdie, 448 Bagot St.
Figure 19: Sarindar Dhaliwal, Call the Wind Virago, 2003; installation detail. Collection: the artist. Image: Jocelyn Purdie, 448 Bagot St.

Figure 20: Sarindar Dhaliwal, *Call the Wind Virago*, 2003; Installation detail. Collection: the artist. Image: Jocelyn Purdie, 448 Bagot St
Figure 21: Jan Allen, *Neighbourhood Watch*, view from street looking into porch, 2004; Installation detail. Collection: the artist. Image: Jocelyn Purdie, 448 Bagot St.


Figure 24: Mark Prier, Nomadsland, view from street, 2007; Installation. Collection: the artist. Image: Mark Prier, Corner Brooke, Newfoundland.

Figure 25: Mark Prier, Nomadsland, view from street, 2007; Installation. Collection: the artist. Image: Mark Prier, Corner Brooke, Newfoundland.

Figure 26: Mark Prier, Nomadsland, view from street, 2007; Installation. Collection: the artist. Image: Mark Prier, Corner Brooke, Newfoundland.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

Historian and cultural writer Deborah Root applies the phrase: “the dreams of regimentation are undone by actions of the living,” to describe the ambulatory art interventions Belgian-born Mexico-based artist Francis Alÿs has enacted in cities throughout the world (Root 2007, 65). In his practice Alÿs maps the city, “staging elusive scenarios and making poetic films and animations.” In the project, Paradox of Praxis, the artist pushed a block of ice through the streets of Mexico City until it melted, and in another he videotaped a boy in a poor neighbourhood in Mexico City kicking a plastic water bottle up a steep hill until it rolled down again. The projects were inspired by his relationship with the people and the neighbourhoods of his adopted home, Mexico City. However, he has also walked the streets of Copenhagen, Sao Paulo, Jerusalem and London, engaging with the local environment to realize his interventions in public space. Most recently, he produced When Faith Moves Mountains (2002), in which 500 people at Ventanilla, outside Lima, Peru, formed a single line at the foot of a giant sand dune and moved it four inches using shovels. Alÿs’ work provides just one example of a local art practice that explores the relationship between forms of artistic engagement and a public life.

34 From the website <http://www.postmedia.net/alys/alys.htm> (last consulted November, 2007)
Similarly, the local art projects I examine in this thesis are deployed in unconventional spaces -- in urban neighbourhoods. Examined within the conceptual framework of the neighbourhood imaginary, I argue that, while the projects are aesthetically distinct and address different cultural and social issues, it is through the shared condition of locality that the common themes of nation, community, and citizenship can be examined and located within the discourse on globalization.

In discussions of the concept of the local, scholars (S. Zukin 1995; D. Harvey 1989; M. Kwon 2002; L. Lippard 1997) suggest that there has been loss of specificity of place that is fuelled by the effects of globalization, where enhanced technology, mobility, and consumption accommodate an expanding capitalist order. Therefore, it is arguable that the local neighbourhood, as a place of face-to-face exchange, is an important factor in shaping identity and citizenship. And, if neighbourhood can be leveraged to facilitate civic engagement and acts of citizenship, perhaps artistic production in this milieu has similar resonance. I suggest that, by intervening in the public spaces of the neighbourhood, art facilitates a public dialogue and provides the context for a critical examination of the values and experiences that shape community.

Hannah Arendt (1958) suggests that self-awareness and identity formation of citizens coexisting in plurality, while not necessarily place-bound, is space-bound in that it is in “the spaces of appearance” -- the public sphere-- where we engage publicly with others, and where people come together to bring their own (and society’s) identity into being. In her discussion, Dolores Hayden (1995) argues that people identify with place through public memory that is shaped by a complex relationship between the connection
to place, and the politics of space. As well, Lucy Lippard maintains that the local accommodates “distinctions of local difference and specificities of place,” which is increasingly important in a society where the expansion of capitalism in the global economy has resulted in a homogenization of space (Lippard in Kwon 2002, 158). Such discussions suggest that a concept of place is complex. Neither exclusively local nor global, it is both. It is a fluid concept that provides the context for artists to critically examine aspects of globalization that shape public life (See Amin 2004, Hayden 1995, Massey 1994, Lippard 1997, Meyrowitz 1990, and Urry 2002).

The art projects examined in this thesis take place in different neighbourhoods, and while they draw on local cultural and social histories to ground them in a specific place, I suggest that the geographical location is not the only way the work produces meaning. Instead, I propose that The Swamp Ward Window, El Patio de Nin and The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach telescope outward, using the neighbourhood as the conceptual base for the works. The project venues, together with the issues addressed by the art projects, contribute to a notion of public that is variable, where the ideas expressed do not occur in isolation but are an integral part of a global world (Phillips, 2004). The local, then, is the common condition from which the projects resonate with other practices in other cities, making locality a useful tool for critical enquiry into the systems of globalization and public space.

In their discussions, scholars David Harvey (1990, 1993) and Ash Amin (2002, 2004) argue that the local is increasingly linked to the global through neo-liberal strategies of economic control and through “global networks of organization, which
include everyday transnational flow of ideas and the growth of transnational networks of influence” (Amin 2004, 33). These processes absorb distinctions of place and subsume or marginalize public space, marking the local as a space where standardization of cities, for capital, conspires to further diminish the public sphere and impact public space.

In their discussions of public art practices Rosalyn Deutsche (1992, 2000) and Patricia Phillips (2004, 2003, 1999, 1992) suggest that the present role of public art isn’t to simply ‘reflect’ social reality, as per traditional art historical paradigms, but to mobilize the work’s context in the production of meaning. Deutsche maintains that the site-specificity of much critical public art incorporates symbolic, social, and political meanings, as well as the historical and discursive situation in which audience and artists are located. Site-specific public art, she argues, requires that the “urban space occupied by a work be understood, just as art and art institutions had been, as socially constructed spaces” (Deutsche 1992, 159). And Phillips (2004) suggests that the public realm is a mutable space, not only a spatial construct, but a conceptual one in which the art engages with site, society, personal, and collective elements of civic life.

Arguably, then, public forms of artistic engagement in unconventional spaces are part of a wider social and cultural practice and, as such, engage with a broader and more diverse public. As such, they have the potential to communicate ideas in a way that is counter to that described by Grant Kester (1993, 1998, 2004), who suggests that these forms of artistic engagement make assumptions about audience and, rather than addressing a non-art alternative audience, they speak to an imaginary viewer, one whose thinking will be transformed by the experience of the piece. He refers to this as the
“implied viewer,” which he employs as a tool to examine the artist’s work in alternative sites, and their relationship to audience. As well, Miwon Kwon (2002) suggests that in considering public art projects that reference and mobilize the place of specific communities or community-based concepts, the “interaction between an artist and a given community is not based on a direct, unmediated relationship. Instead it is circumscribed within a more complex network of motivations, expectations and projections among all involved,” thereby serving the thematic drive of the artist (Kwon 2002, 52).

The locations of The Swamp Ward Window, El Patio de Nin, and The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach in unconventional sites, in public spaces, facilitate an engagement with diverse audiences and, as such, precipitate diverse responses. Therefore, a critical examination of artistic motivation, audience and the instrumentalization of the artist in global economies is important in any discussion on aesthetic practices that make a claim on public space.

Artist Marcus Schubert describes his experience of Iris Haüssler’s The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach as follows,

One of the important results of Iris' exploration in the Wagenbach legacy has to do with the effect upon a community. I think for a community it is vital to have the presence of "antennas" for metaphysical experience. The experience that such rogue creations engender also galvanizes the community within which they reside. All of a sudden the community becomes unified in the experience of a creative wonder. And people begin to interact, speculating about what is going on, how great it is, or how disturbing it is (Schubert, 2006).35

35From the website, Iris Haussler <http://www.haeussler.ca/legacy/artist.html> (last consulted January 2008).
I suggest that even though the artists may, as Kwon (2002) argues, reify individuals or communities, the publicity of the sites and the sociality of the neighbourhood provide a context for artists and curators to examine community and citizenship, linking aesthetic ideas to public life.
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