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Zoe Price March 12, 2025

From Playground to Classroom: Evolution of the Situation in the Art of Mary Miss

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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This thesis traces the evolution of Mary Miss's practice from the 1970s until now. Since the 1970s, Miss's artwork has been physically in public, but how she has engaged the viewer in the public realm has changed. Scholars have attempted to craft a narrative of continuity in Miss's practice that centers on environmental activism. I, however, argue that there was a pivotal moment in Mary Miss's career when, in 1982, she adapted the formal and experiential elements of her monumental constructions to fulfill the new needs in public art, which she outlines in her lecture "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." After this moment, Miss increasingly incorporated the public realm and the environment into her work.

I argue that before 1982, Miss explored how the "expanded situation" of viewing, defined under minimalism, changed outdoors. The "expanded situation" involves not just the object but also the space around it and the viewer's embodied experience within the space. I examine how the terms—object, space, and viewer—evolve as Miss's intentions as a public artist change. *Battery Park Landfill*, 1973, and *Field Rotation*, 1980-81, represent what I have termed the playground in Miss's practice because they emphasize embodied exploration over education. In contrast, *Greenwood Pond: Double Site*, 1986-1989, represents a transitional moment in which embodied exploration is combined with educational and sustainable programs representing the playground/outdoor classroom hybrid. Finally, in the present, Miss is focusing on City as a Living Laboratory (CaLL), which relies on signage and community programming to educate the public on a particular issue of sustainability. The current phase of Miss's practice represents the full move out of the playground and into the classroom.

By situating key moments in Miss's practice within changing paradigms in public art — antagonistic, ecological, educational—I not only account for the change in her work but also examine different models of working in public over time. Considering issues of sustainability, legibility, and maintenance through the lens of Mary Miss, this paper traces how the expectations for public artists and their ability to install work in public have changed, which can impact the work's effectiveness.

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Introduction

Let us say that artists have certain calling cards, such as favored materials, forms, or subject matter, such that we as viewers could point and say, "That is a work by so and so." If we accept this premise, to a certain extent at least, then let us look at two works made about thirty years apart by the artist Mary Miss: *Battery Park Landfill,* 1973 and *Streamlines: Indianapolis/City as Living Lab,* 2015. Both works are located outdoors and incorporate the shape of the circle, but that is where their similarities end. If the earlier work, *Battery Park Landfill,* were still extant, one would see "five flat, fencelike forms with holes in them,"[1] uniform in size, constructed of wood, held together at the seams with tar, and evenly spaced across the landfill. According to art critic Lucy Lippard, the experience of approaching this work was underwhelming and disappointing.[2] However, when the viewer came to stand directly in front of the "flats" they were sucked into a telescopic view of space (fig 1).[3] Standing directly in front of the fences, five circular cut-outs which frame the horizon were revealed to the viewer. The first of the five fences had a full circle cut out of its center; two planks of wood separated the circle from the ground and a sliver of wood separated it from the top of the fence. The following circular cut-outs in the fences opened up to the ground, with "the last one only a shallow arc above the ground."[4] Because the shape and size of the fences remained constant as the cut-outs gradually became shallower, the circles appeared as if they were descending into the ground. The effect of the descending circles was that they progressively obscured what the viewer perceived as the horizon line. The view of the horizon was contained within the frame of the circles, and as

[1] Lucy R. Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, 210-213. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co.
[2] Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," 211.
[3] Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," 211.
[4] Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," 212.

they dropped into the ground the perceived horizon appeared to be moving farther away though the viewer stands still. Though the work was installed on the desolate landfill that is now Battery Park City, it did not address the environmental condition of the landfill. Rather, the landfill provided a large, blank backdrop in the otherwise dense city.

Compare *Battery Park Landfill* to *Streamlines*, which is spread across multiple actively inhabited sites in Indianapolis (fig. 2). Far from desolate, the Fall Creek/Mapleton Creek site is a city park that abuts a neighborhood. *Streamlines* quietly announces itself to the passerby on the street with a slender, horizontal, red beam that reaches out to meet the road. If the viewer follows this beam, they will find that it is one of many that creates a longer line leading to a central circular pedestal. Text wrapping around the pedestal prompts the viewer to "step up for water." Standing on top of the pedestal, big enough for one or two people, the viewer looks up into a circular, canted mirror, supported by an approximately eight-foot-tall steel pole. In the mirror the viewer sees a reflection of their body within the site. On the mirror's surface the words "land," "air," and "water" spin out from their reflection. Secondary poles placed at hip-height carry circular project maps that locate the work in relation to the city's waterways, and include descriptions of the plant and animal life associated with this creek. Radiating from the platform are five other lines composed of red beams of various lengths. At the other end of the red lines the viewer finds three low, toadstool like signs, circles held up by poles, which feature prompts for the viewer to further explore this waterway or the others in the city. The prompts are written backward and can only be read when the viewer turns around and gazes into a taller mirror where the text from the circles is reflected in the correct direction, creating a view of the site that includes the information, the stream, and the viewer (fig. 3).

The flat fencelike forms that occupy the expanse of space in Battery Park are closer to architecture, while the work in Indianapolis resembles map markers or signage intended to catch the viewer's attention and stop them in their tracks. Looking at these two works, made almost forty years apart, one wonders how Miss got from point A to point B. That is what this thesis will account for. At *Battery Park Landfill,* Miss uses the frame to control vision and movement to alter the viewer's perception of the site. In Indianapolis, Miss is not manipulating the way the physical features of the site are viewed. Rather, she uses her work to educate the viewer on the features of the site as they are.

Miss has been working as an artist since the 1960s. In the mid to late sixties, she began installing her works outside the gallery walls. Her early works, such as the one in Battery Park, explore the minimalist concerns of the body's relation to the object in space and to site by prompting slow movement. The site, however, remains a neutral backdrop as Miss does not address the history of the place, the urban context of the city, or the environmental condition of a landfill. Likewise, the viewer is a neutral and self-contained participant, in that Miss does not address their social situation or their role in the larger environment but alters their perception of space as an unmarked subject. In her early works, she treats the site as the neutral backdrop the gallery supposedly (but never actually) provided. In her later works, such as the one in Indianapolis and other works created under her organization City as Living Laboratory (CaLL), artists collaborate with scientists and residents of urban communities to create public art and programming that attempts to bring awareness to environmental issues and provide sustainable solutions. The projects created under CaLL assume a viewer who knows nothing about the history or ecology of the site and aim to educate the viewer about a particular feature of the site, altering their everyday interactions with the environment toward sustainable ends. Through these

interventions, which include the physical work, artist talks, walks, and community programming, CaLL seeks to "make sustainability tangible"[5] in dense urban spaces. Though the body is obviously required to move through the city, the works do not create an embodied experience of their site in the way that *Battery Park Landfill* did. The CaLL works rely on didactics and programming to mediate between the viewer, the site, and the information.

Scholarship on Miss often attempts to craft a narrative of continuity between her early and more recent works. Since she has been making work outdoors for the majority of her career, scholars claim that there has always been some sort of environmental activism in her work or engagement with the environment beyond its physical features. Essays on Miss, such as "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement," by Daniel Abramson, or "The Art of Engagement in the Work of Mary Miss," by Christian Zapatka, use the term engagement to draw a throughline from her early works to her works produced in the 1990s and early 2000s. When scholars privilege consistency over development, they fail to distinguish between the specific kinds of engagement that mark different moments in Miss's career. I will argue that there is a distinct moment in which her practice changed: around 1982, when she gave the lecture "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." Before this moment, Miss explored how works of art could engage the viewer not only visually but also through all of their other sensory and bodily experiences. After 1982 her practice takes a pedagogical turn, seeking to educate the viewer as a member of a social body, who has an effect on the ecosystem. Of course, it can be said that Miss has always been interested in "engaging" the viewer on some level, but what I will do is trace when and where she changes the methods of her engagement, and thus account for differences in form.

[5] City as Living Laboratory, "Mission," accessed December 20, 2024, https://www.cityaslivinglab.org/missionpb.

The first section of my thesis will situate Miss's work in relation to minimalism. Specifically, it will engage the minimalist artist and writer Robert Morris's definition of the "public mode" of perception and the "extended situation" created by monumental works. In this section I will also provide a literature review. I will show how contemporaneous scholars framed Miss's work, and how scholars later in the 2000s retroactively applied the values expressed in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture" to her works made before 1982. In the lecture, Miss calls for artists working in public to rethink their obligation to that public. She charges artists to leave the blank canvas that was "the West" and to move their work into densely populated urban spaces. Within these urban spaces she calls for not just plaza decoration or "plop-art" but for works that create new spaces in which the viewer can take up psychological residence, and which provide respite from the hectic cityscape. She also argues for works that are not just specific to the topography of their site but address a site's ecology, history, or social conditions that had previously gone unnoticed. She provides three requirements for this new type of work: the use of vernacular material, the human scale, and accessibility on the street level.[6] While this essay is a call for action, directed at other artists, we can also understand it as Miss's attempt to outline the new principles that will govern her own practice from this point forward. I will speculate that there are two other events that are relevant to Miss's reframing of herself as an artist in service of the public: the 1979 symposium, "Land Reclamation as Sculpture," in which Miss participated, and the controversy surrounding Richard Serra's *Titled Arc,* erected in Foley Federal Plaza in 1981.

The second section of my thesis will compare two works: *Field Rotation,* completed in 1980 and *Greenwood Pond: Double Site* built in the years 1986-89. These two works are

[6] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," Perspecta 21 (1984): 53–69. https://doi.org/10.2307/1567080.

morphologically similar: each is a large, multi-part, spatially dispersed, site construction that prompts exploratory movement. However, the construction of *Field Rotation* creates a contrast between vision and movement felt as the viewer navigates the site. Double Site builds upon this embodied exploration, but the construction now comprises various social and ecological programs as well. This work represents a moment after "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," in which the definitions of the site, construction, and viewer have changed and expanded, even if the forms remain similar. Comparing how Miss delineates these, I argue her work has gone from acting as a playground, centering the embodied exploration of a construction in space, to functioning as an outdoor classroom, emphasizing ecological pedagogy over physical exploration.

The current phase of Miss's practice will not be represented by a single work but rather the organization she has founded, City as a Living Laboratory or CaLL. The project began in 2005 and is the culmination of the goals Miss began to lay out in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." CaLL's mission is "to use the power of art and science to promote understanding of critical environmental challenges in local communities and spur action for sustainable solutions."[7] The projects are not solely reliant on Miss's physical intervention at the site. CaLL projects incorporate and depend upon programming such as talks and walks as well as didactic material on site and online. Defining the construction is thus challenging, as the physical manifestation of the work becomes secondary to the programming that supplements it.

I argue that we see her work shift formally from using the tools of the playground, emphasizing physical interaction, to that of the classroom, emphasizing educating the viewer on a given topic. The viewer has not become less important, but their body certainly has. The scale

[7] "Artists + Scientists + Communities," City as a Living Laboratory, accessed on October 11, 2024, https://www.cityaslivinglab.org/missionp.

of the monument or architecture is no longer necessary or suited to the sustainability, infrastructural, or social programs of the CaLL framework, which fulfills the charge laid in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." The context and function of public art has changed over time, and Miss's work is not apart from that change but rather actively responds to it. To ignore that development in favor of a narrative of continuity is to grossly misunderstand the trajectory of her practice.

Theories of Engagement: From the Expanded to the Extremely Clear Situation

This section will consider the terms put forward by the minimalist artist and writer Robert Morris, who elaborated in 1966 the "public mode" of viewing works of monumental scale. Monumental works encompassed an "expanded situation." I will compare Morris's "expanded situation" to Miss's "extremely clear situation" as cited by art critic Lucy Lippard writing about *Battery Park Landfill*, 1973, to establish Miss's connection to minimalism. After Miss has been connected to minimalism through an investigation of these terms, I will compare scholarship from the 1970s and early 80s, which situates her work in relation to her contemporaries who were working through ideas of embodied viewing. The art historical context thus established, I will offer a critique of the way more recent scholarship from the 2000s applies the terms of "engagement," from the 1982 lecture "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," to Miss's work created before the lecture.

In the 1970s, artists were negotiating with the legacy of minimalism. One such model of minimalism was put forward by artist Robert Morris in his "Notes on Sculpture," first published in *Artforum* in 1966. This text is described by art historian Alex Potts as one of the most significant early attempts "to make serious issue of the fact that the apprehension of a work in

three dimensions is irreducible to conventional models of image or form perception."[8] The condition of viewing a three-dimensional sculpture in real space was the foil to the self-contained modernist painting. During the 1960s, artists, such as Morris, were talking back to modernist painting both in their work and in their writing. In "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2" Morris sets up two poles of viewing experience based on the scale of the sculpture: the public (associated with monumental works or works larger than one's body) and the intimate (associated with objects smaller than one's body). Potts tells us it is the public mode of viewing that denies "the legitimacy of any private communion with the object which modernist aesthetics seemed to privilege."[9] The small object is characterized by the personal or intimate mode of viewing because it does not require a larger spatial field and places no demands on the viewer's body. Morris argues that small works viewed in the intimate mode "tend to eliminate the viewer to the degree that these details pull him into an intimate reaction with the work and out of the space in which the object exists."[10] Works smaller than the body lack a spatial field and thus the viewer as a body in real space ceases to exist, leaving only the object. Monumental works, however, require the viewer to keep their distance and step back "in order to take the whole of any one view into one's field of vision."[11] The monumental object "includes more of the space around itself than a smaller [object]."[12] The public mode of perception is characterized by what Morris calls the "extended" or "expanded situation." In the "extended situation" more factors are necessary for the apprehension of the work "than objects smaller than the body, namely, the

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[8] Alex Potts, "The Performance of Viewing," in *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, by Alex Potts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), accessed December 20, 2024, https://aaeportal-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/?id=-14739

[9] Alex Potts, "The Performance of Viewing," 239.

[10] Alex Potts, "The Performance of Viewing," 239.

[11] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," 13.

[12] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," 13.

literal space in which they exist, and the kinesthetic demands placed upon the body."[13] The "extended situation" thus includes the terms space, the body (or viewer), as well as the object, which "has not become less important…merely less self-important."[14] By insisting that the space and the body are a part of the experience of viewing an artwork, Morris rejects any modernist presumption that viewing should be a private communion between a painting and a disembodied eye. Modernist work was often understood to address itself to a disembodied eye derived from a Cartesian model of perception in which consciousness exists separately from the body. By contrast, Morris's model of minimalist art, and scholars writing about it, invoked Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological model of perception, which posits that the way we see and experience the world, our consciousness, is bound to our moving body, not separate from it. We understand the world through our body's relationship to it and thus we understand a work of art by our body's relationship to it.

In Morris's initial definition of the "expanded situation" of monumental sculpture, the object is a gestalt form, the space is the enclosed gallery, and the viewer is contained within that space. But he also saw other possibilities: "Why not put the work outside and further change the terms?" he asks. He goes on to state, "Ideally, it is a space without architecture as background and reference, which would give different terms to work with."[15] In moving the "extended situation" outdoors, it loses both the architectural and institutional framework the gallery provided. In the 1970s, Miss and other artists moved outside the gallery and investigated these terms, thereby answering, though maybe not directly, Morris's call.

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[13] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," 14.
[14] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," 17.
[15] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," 17.

In her essay about *Battery Park Landfill,* "An Extremely Clear Situation," art historian Lucy Lippard cites Miss as saying, "While people were dealing with encompassing theories or philosophies—like Minimalism putting the most theoretical weight on the least complicated physical object—I have been interested only in looking, making, and expressing extremely clear situations."[16] As opposed to the minimalist specific object associated with artist Donald Judd, Miss understands the object qualities of her work—its material, shape, color, etc.—as secondary to how it makes clear the situation of the viewer, the construction, and the site. The experience of the gestalt in the gallery depends on its perception as a discrete object within the gallery space. The boundaries between the object and the space are clear, making the gestalt optically stable. In contrast, the construction of *Battery Park Landfill* both surrounds and is surrounded by the space of the landfill. Approaching *Battery Park Landfill,* the experience is similar to that of the discrete object in space. However, when the viewer positions themselves in front of the fences, the circular frames align, changing the image of the horizon. The experience of *Battery Park Landfill* does not rely on the strict separation of the construction, the site, and the viewer; in fact, the characteristic view of the work relies on the triad of terms converging in a moment. As described by Lippard, "The plank fences, only false facades, nailed to supporting posts on the back become what they are—not the sculpture but the vehicle for the experience of the sculpture, which exists in thin air, or rather in the distance crystallized."[17] For Lippard it is not the positive space of the fences; rather, it is the negative space of the circles where the sculpture resides. In the "expanded situation," the space becomes a part of the experience of the work. In *Battery Park Landfill* the site is not only a part of the viewing experience but also a part of the work's composition. The object is stable and contained within an architectural frame such as a gallery. The construction is

[16] Lippard, "An Extremely Clear Situation," 213.
[17] Lippard, "An Extremely Clear Situation," 211.

not quite architecture and not quite an object. It does not create interior space as a building does, but it controls movement and shapes space in a way that an object cannot. With the construction, Miss blurs the boundaries between object and space from the "expanded situation." In the "extremely clear situation" construction is the more appropriate term than object.

The conditions of creating site-specific work outside of the gallery necessitate new terminology to describe the "expanded situation" moved outdoors. The viewer no longer walks around an object in an enclosed gallery space – it is now the construction that dictates movement and controls the views of the site. While we see that Miss treats the site as neutral in the way the space was understood to be, the site does not provide the same physical blank slate that the gallery did. The gallery space is built to house the object while the construction is built according to the conditions of the site. In lieu of Morris's terms of object, viewer, and space, I propose here construction, viewer, and site. Up until around 1982, the viewer is understood by Miss as an unmarked subject, purely corporeal, as opposed to an individual with needs, biases, or an effect on the world outside of their experience within the work. In this regard, it is very much in keeping with the minimalist conception of the embodied viewer. After 1982, however, the body addressed by Miss's work is emphatically embedded within a larger ecological and social system. I will elaborate upon this in the next section. Morris's terms are thus useful for understanding the artistic context out of which Miss emerges and from which she departs.

The scholarship produced on Miss in the late 1970s situated her work in relation to minimalism by analyzing how she continued making works that investigated phenomenological perception, like Morris, but moved away from the specific object, associated with Judd. This scholarship may not explicitly define her work as post-minimalist, but it investigates the work through the post-minimalist lens. The category of post-minimalist art is wide ranging, and I

cannot possibly address it in its entirety here except to give some context about where the term came from and to offer a brief list of the types of work it has been applied to. The term was coined by art critic Robert Pincus-Witten in his 1971 book *Postminimalism.* Witten makes the minimalist/post minimalist distinction, clarifying that minimalism "emphasized large-scale, unitary forms and the gestalt experience of them," while post-minimalism emphasized the "pre-executive or conceptual bases of art and the insistently material process of its making."[18]An abundance of new terms arose in order to categorize the new work during the period of 1970-1980, such as "Process Art," "Body Art," "Conceptual Art," "Earth Art," and "Eccentric Abstraction." Works such as Miss's were a part of the discourse on "Earth Art" or "Land Art," although she did not speak about her work using these titles. Rather than making objects or unitary forms of sleek materials, Miss created site-constructions in the landscape using vernacular materials, making plain to the viewer the means by which the works were constructed.

In her landmark essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 1979, art historian Rosalind Krauss uses Miss's 1978 work *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* (fig. 4) to describe the obscured position sculpture found itself in between the 1960s and 1970s, as artists rejected modernist medium specificity. She describes the ambivalent feeling when looking at Miss's construction, stating, "and so we stare at the pit in the earth and think we both do and don't know what sculpture is."[19] She states that critics historicized this work in order to legitimize it, drawing connections to site-specific precedents such as "Stonehenge, the Nazca Lines, the Toltec ballcourts." All of these precedents she states were, of course, "not sculpture."[20] The opposite of

[18] Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (Out of London Press, 1977).
[19] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October 8*, Volume 8 (Spring 1979): 30–31, The MIT Press, https://doi.org/10.2307/778224.
[20] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 33.

this condition was sculpture under modernism, which experienced a kind of sitelessness or homelessness.[21] Finally, under minimalism in the 1960s sculpture was "pure negativity, the combination of exclusions": neither *landscape* nor *architecture*.[22] She suggests that if we accept that sculpture in the 1960s had become the opposition of negatives then these negative terms logically have a positive counterpart. In other words, *not-architecture* is, "according to the logic of a certain kind of expansion, just another way of expressing the term *landscape,* and the *not landscape* is, simply architecture."[23] This logical expansion suspends sculpture and allows landscape and architecture, two categories previously excluded, into art criticism. To make her logical argument, she places these terms in a Klein Group diagram with *not-landscape* and *not-architecture,* creating the axis of sculpture and their positive opposites—*landscape* and *architecture*—on the opposite axis (fig. 5). Works that occupy the axis of *landscape* and *architecture*, such as Robert Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed* and Miss's *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys,* she terms "site constructions." If we allow these terms into the discourse of "sculpture," the Klein group can be fully filled out, opening up two more terms to discuss the kinds of work being produced at this time, none of which equated to sculpture. The axis of *landscape* and *not landscape* is a "marked site," and the axis of *architecture* and *not architecture* is an "axiomatic structure."

Krauss's schematized, logical approach was just one way scholars attempted to work through the obscured position the new sculpture found itself in during the 1970s as it became closer to architecture, in some cases. For Krauss such work could be categorized as an "axiomatic structure," which uses the features of the architectural experience, "the abstract

[21] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 34.
[22] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 37.
[23] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 37.

conditions of openness and closure," and maps them "onto the reality of a given space."[24] *Battery Park Landfill* is an example of this. It is not a structure but uses the architectural conditions of openness and closure to shape the site. Robert Morris, writing *after* "Notes on Sculpture," was also thinking about the conditions of the new sculpture. He argues that sculpture that creates space rather than occupies it creates a sense of "presentness." In his essay "The Present Tense of Space," originally published in *Art in America* in 1978, Morris describes several artworks made after the 1960s that were experientially different than the specific object.[25] Though the essay does not engage individual works rigorously, Miss is listed as one of the artists who makes work that induces what he calls "presentness." Citing George Herbert Mead, Morris's definition of presentness divides the self (the viewer in this case) into the "I" and the "me." The "I" "has to do with the present-time experiencing self, consciously reacting," and the "me" "is the self-reconstituted from various remembered indices."[26] For Morris, the "I" is associated with the present, spaces, and movement. The "me" is associated with memory, objects, and stasis. He argues that the specific object or unitary form, since it is experienced as a static image, falls into the "me" category. The "I" is associated with the continuously unfolding present as experienced by a body in motion. These works are known "behaviorally rather than imagistically" and are therefore more a function of experience in real time than an object that can be apprehended immediately as a static whole.[27] Works such as *Battery Park Landfill,* which employ "distances rather than contained interiors,"[28] create an extended spatial field that is

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[24] Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 41.

[25] Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris,* ed. Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh, Hal Foster, Denis Hollier, and John Rajchman (The MIT Press, 1970), 175.
[26] Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 177.
[27] Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 194
[28] Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 197.

experienced in time and comes closer to the "I" experience of presentness. This contrasts with the gallery space, which is not spatial in terms of experience but is perceived as immediately as the objects it houses.[29] The construction responds to the physical features of the site, fitting the work specifically to that site rather than inserting an object in the gallery, which is built to house objects. Miss is harnessing architecture's capacity to shape space and guide movement—not to construct a building, but to create a form that unfolds over time as the viewer moves through it, rather than around it. The gestalt necessarily exists in time but, because of its simplicity of form, is immediately understood by the viewer. The image of *Battery Park Landfill* does not reveal itself immediately to the viewer. Only when the viewer aligns their body with the circular frames does the image of the horizon change. The experience is embodied, but it is not gestalt.

Some of Miss's works contained "static images" which were contrasted by the movement of the body her constructions prompted. During the late 1970s Miss explored how the frame, which circumscribes a static image, could produce a contrast between vision and movement over time on the site. We see this in *Battery Park Landfill* and in other works that use the frame such as *Staged Gates* (1979) and *Veiled Landscape* (1979). Art Historian Ronald J. Onorato describes this contrast well, discussing other of Miss's works in his 1978 *Artforum* article "Illusive Spaces; The Art of Mary Miss." He articulates the dual physical and mental action at play in these works, saying that the immediate mental perception of the framed landscape provides the passive complement to the activity of "climbing, walking, exploring or stretching which we are asked to perform in these spaces."[30] The frame allows for pause for contemplation of the static image which is contrasted by the view of the site from a body in motion.[31] It is not the "illusionistic-

[29] Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 197.
[30] Ronald J. Onorato, "Illusive Spaces: The Art of Mary Miss," *Artforum* 17, no. 4 (1978): 28-33, https://www.artforum.com/features/illusive-spaces-the-art-of-mary-miss-209155/.
[31] Onorato, "Illusive Spaces: The Art of Mary Miss," 29.

symbolic depth of painting, the primarily metaphoric space of sculpture, or the functional enclosure of architecture,"[32] although it takes elements from all three. In *Staged Gates* (fig. 6), the static pictorial quality of the image framed by the gates contrasts the dynamic experience of moving through them, dictated by the architectural program of a gate. Onorato describes Miss's works as "partially segregated…private places separating the viewer from the environment."[33] We understand here that though these works are physically in public, sometimes on publicly owned land, the experience is individual. The "public mode" of perception, even outdoors, does not involve the viewer in a public comprised of others. The experience of the work does not situate the viewer's body in relation to other bodies or some sort of larger sense of public, but rather situates the viewer's body and vision in relation to Miss's construction.

Having established the contemporaneous reception of Miss's works made before 1982, I will now look to surveys of Miss's work written in the 1990s and early 2000s. I wish to critically investigate the way scholars use the term "engagement," drawing upon Miss's remarks in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." In this lecture, Miss critiques models of making art in public that were prevalent at the time, and lays the charge to artists to create work that will

> give people the luxury of engagement, not confrontation. Think of spaces/structures that would allow people to be the connectors between the open space—parks, waterfronts—and the dense areas of midtown. Priorities: breathing space, human scale, firsthand experience, focusing on the strong visual elements of the city.[34]

It is statements such as this from "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture" that scholars have retroactively applied to her work made before 1982. Scholars argue that because her works have

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[32] Onorato, "Illusive Spaces: The Art of Mary Miss," 33.
[33] Onorato, "Illusive Spaces: The Art of Mary Miss," 29.
[34] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," 61.

been outdoors since the late sixties, she has always been concerned with engaging the site in an ecological way for the public good. Because she has continued to work at a similar scale and with similar materials in the 1970s and late 80s, scholars argue that her work before 1982 shared all of the goals outlined in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." Two representative essays were written five years apart: "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement" (2004), by Daniel Abramson and "The Art of Engagement in the Work of Mary Miss" (1997), written by Christian Zapatka. Both authors use the term engagement to draw a through line in Miss's career to date. Abramson begins his essay saying, "From the inception of her career, the themes of collective engagement and subjective examination of everyday situations have been hallmarks of the art of Mary Miss."[35] While we will see this in her works after 1982, her works before are not about collective engagement even when they are placed in public space. They are addressed to individual perception. As previously discussed, the work of the 1970s was in keeping with Morris's "public mode" of viewing, which was not about a collective but about the individual's experience. Abramson draws a connection between Miss and minimalism by saying she is working with minimalist geometries— "grids, repetitions, spatial complexity, openness to the ground, and depersonalized treatment of materials"[36]—but that she rejects minimalist monumentality, aggression, and emphasis on materiality. While Miss did reject minimalist aggression and emphasis on materiality, the embodied experience her constructions produce is a condition of their monumental scale. Abramson does not acknowledge the phenomenological experience of viewing that was worked through by minimalists like Morris. It is odd to draw out the formal connections of Miss's work to minimalism—their shared object qualities—but not

[35] Daniel M. Abramson, "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement," in *Mary Miss,* ed. Mark Lamster (Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 33-53.
[36] Daniel M. Abramson, "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement," 34-35.

their experiential quality, which is highlighted in contemporaneous scholarship and in Miss's own words, such as in "An Extremely Clear Situation." He provides a survey of her work up until the point when the essay was written, and his descriptions of individual pieces are clear and compelling. He ends the essay citing "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture":

> Miss writes, maybe with this art of engagement we can help people develop lives based on the richness and complexity of our times, where a future we would want to participate in seems possible to imagine. In her art, we glimpse new possibilities for identifying ourselves, our social relations to others, and, ultimately, our place in the American Landscape.[37]

This sentence conflates different moments in Miss's practice and uses the term engagement to stitch them together. The early work is not social; it is highly individual. It is also not about creating a better future for the viewer; it is firmly grounded in the present. Though Miss's early work does situate the viewer's body in relation to the landscape, Abramson's use of the term American makes it seem more politicized or less neutral, which is not the case.

Zapatka argues that Miss sought to engage the viewer by making them pay attention to what they may not have noticed on their own. He describes a work such as *Battery Park Landfill* as a framing device that gives "eyeglasses to the public to help them comprehend their environment, to slow down and appreciate what already exists."[38] I would argue that while this kind of work prompts a slowing of perception, it does not necessarily prompt comprehension. In fact, a work like *Battery Park Landfill* changes the appearance of the horizon the viewer is familiar with, so it does not make the viewer comprehend what is already there but rather alters

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[37] Daniel M. Abramson, "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement," 49.

[38] Christian Zapatka, "The Art of Engagement in the Work of Mary Miss," in *Mary Miss,* ed. Guia Sambonet (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1997), 6-33.

their expectations. Zapatka does in fact bring up Morris, distinguishing Miss's work from Morris's on the grounds that "not only does the object/subject become part of the viewer's province but the viewer is invited literally to occupy the very space created by the object."[39] This aligns with my definition of the construction. The gestalt does not create new space, but the construction does, though both are experienced phenomenologically. In the above quote, we see that Zapatka has spent time working through Miss's connection to Morris's phenomenological model of minimalism, but he ends the essay vaguely:

> In all cases it has been the intention of the artist to make places in which people can see more than what they imagined they could see and to question the boundaries of space that are normally taken for granted. The context of a site is important for Miss not only as a starting point in her work but as the subject for a scrutiny that leads to the deft transformation of that which is already known to that which is unknown.[40]

Here he is using the phrase "see[ing] more than what [one] imagined," glossing over the differences between Miss's early and current work that he has just spent the whole essay highlighting. Furthermore, his emphasis on vision leaves out the bodily experience upon which the exploration of the site depends.

Zapatka spends much of the essay explaining how Miss is inspired by the historical context of the site, which is manifest in her references to vernacular architecture, whether or not the viewer understands the reference. What my next section will make evident is that Zapatka is conflating two different moments in Miss practice. Miss takes the context of the site as a starting point before and after 1982, but the extent to which that context is legible to the viewer changes.

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[39] Christian Zapatka, "The Art of Engagement in the Work of Mary Miss," 22.

[40] Christian Zapatka, "The Art of Engagement in the Work of Mary Miss," 32.

After 1982 the context of the site is not only where Miss starts, but it is made clear to the viewer in the final work. Finally, Zapatka's argument that Miss's work transforms that which was known into that which is unknown refers to Miss changing something about the site that had always been there, but the viewer had not noticed or experienced. But he does not distinguish the differences in the content of the work (what Miss is transforming) and how it is conveyed to the viewer before and after 1982. Prior to that pivotal year, the content of the work, what the viewer is supposed to understand from it, is much more open-ended, based on individual embodied experience. Afterward, what the viewer is supposed to understand is the specific history, ecology, or social condition of the site. When scholars privilege consistency over development, they generalize the specific kinds of engagement Miss is seeking to effect throughout her career. In the most general sense, Miss engaged the viewer in their environment before 1982, but the nature of this engagement changed, shifting from a phenomenological approach to a pedagogical one. Applying a single term as a blanket statement erases the development in her career over time. In the next section I will trace the terms of viewer, site, and construction across two works that are morphologically similar, but in which Miss's changed intent is evident. In one, Miss engages the individual body; in the other she engages the social body in a larger ecosystem.

Transitioning from Playground to Classroom

When art critic Peter Schjeldahl visited Mary Miss's *Field Rotation*, 1980, at Governors State University in Illinois, he overheard a reporter criticizing the work by likening it to a Chicago playground. For Schjeldahl, the similarity of *Field Rotation* to a playground is positive because it prompts us to consider what a playground really looks like and provides a freshened responsiveness to the everyday.[41] *Field Rotation* represents a distinct type in Mary Miss's oeuvre

[41] Schjeldahl, *The Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park*, 17-20.

of monumental site constructions, with multiple components and lookouts that the viewer can climb up or descend into, exploring the construction as a child explores the structures of a playground set. Before 1982 most of Miss's works, like *Field Rotation,* can be compared to playgrounds, encouraging open-ended exploration while after 1982 her works function as outdoor classrooms, in which bodily movement is oriented to specific educational goals. My thesis locates this change in the function of Miss's site constructions to the year 1982, when she gave the lecture "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," which was then published in 1984. Two events served as catalysts for Miss to formally call for a change in public sculpture: her participation in the "Land Reclamation as Sculpture" symposium in 1979, and the controversy surrounding Richard Serra's *Titled Arc,* which was installed in 1981. This chapter will juxtapose *Field Rotation,* 1980-81, with *Greenwood Pond: Double Site*, 1989-1996, a work she made in the years following her lecture. At this later date, Miss utilized the morphological toolkit of the construction—made of familiar materials with multiple parts—to produce classroom/playground hybrids.

Distinguishing between *Field Rotation* and *Double Site* will hinge on the terms Robert Morris uses to define the "non-personal" or "public" condition of viewing a work of monumental scale, which I discussed in the previous section. First, I will define these terms as they apply to *Field Rotation* and then explain how they expanded in *Greenwood Pond: Double Site*, to fulfill the stated goals of "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture."

From the edge of the parking lot on the Governor's State University campus, one sees rows of wooden posts leading to a large grassy mound at the center of the open field (fig. 7). The terrain appears to be level, but as the viewer follows the posts to the mysterious mound, they find themselves walking on an incline. Here, Miss has used poles cut between four and six feet tall,

which appear to be level, to contrast the sloping topography of the site felt by the viewer when walking. The poles terminate at the grassy mound where the viewer, expecting to summit a hill, is met with a descent into a courtyard whose sharp edges cut into the fluffy grass. Descending into the courtyard by ladder, the viewer's body goes from exposed within the vast field to protected within the walls of the pinwheel-shaped, wood-sided courtyard. This contrast between exposure to and protection from the vast scale of the landscape is repeated within Miss's oeuvre. In the center of the courtyard's gravel floor is an elevated Greek cross rendered in wood beams (fig. 8). Stepping up onto one of these beams, the viewer is led to the central, square-shaped well where the arms of the cross converge. The well collects rainwater, so, when gazing down into it, the viewer wonders how deep Miss has cut into the earth. There are two scaffold-like towers. One tower is placed just outside the courtyard and the other within it. Climbing these towers, the viewer can see the eight lines of poles that radiate from the courtyard. From this vantage point, the viewer comes closest to grasping the characteristic image of the work as captured in aerial photographs (fig. 9). Walking, climbing, and descending through the site the landscape that is perceived by the body in motion contrasts the view of the site from the parking lot. What becomes clear for the viewer as they explore the construction is the role their body plays in perception. The first glimpse of the work tells them one thing, but as they explore it like a playground the shape of landscape and the construction are revealed through their embodied experience.

In her construction, Miss engages with the site's topography. Land is never truly neutral or devoid of content, of course, and it is worth noting that the specific context of this work is a sculpture park. This fact is often left out in monographs of Miss's work. Art historian Rebecca Lee Reynolds posits that, in some cases, the sculpture park is an extension of the "white cube" of

the gallery.[42] Here Miss engages with the site as the "green cube,"[43] a neutral backdrop in which she can experiment with ideas of embodied experience in the landscape. The body that experiences *Field Rotation* is also neutral, meaning that Miss does not consider the viewer as a part of a larger social or environmental milieu. Rather she acts upon the viewer's unmarked corporeality. If we accept that the "green cube" is an extension of the white cube, then we can see that the terms site, construction, and viewer are extensions of the terms space, object, and viewer operative in Minimalism.

Within a year, however, Miss would formally lay a charge for a change in public art though she had likely been thinking through these ideas prior. In her 1982 lecture, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," she critiques the current monumental site-specific artwork for its use of spectacle and argues that functional work integrated into a given context will outlast the visually spectacular.[44] She argues against the monolithic form of public sculpture and calls for artists to create spaces the viewer can inhabit rather than objects which take up space in the dense urban fabric.[45] Creating such spaces will provide psychological relief from the autocratic architecture in cities.[46] These spaces should "give people the luxury of engagement, not confrontation…allow people to be the connectors between the open space—parks, waterfronts, and the dense areas of midtown."[47] She advocates for public art that creates new spaces rather than decorating existing ones. This would make public art active rather than passive, and Miss

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[42] Rebecca Lee Reynolds, "Beyond the Green Cube: Typologies of Experience at American Sculpture Parks," *Public Art Dialogue 1*, Issue 2 (2011): 215-240, https://web-pebscohost-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=3e82d252cc9b-4ffc-85a5-991a4b220889%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl# AN=66788268&db=asu.
[43] Rebecca Lee Reynolds, "Beyond the Green Cube," 216.
[44] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," *Perspecta 21* (1984): 53–69. https://doi.org/10.2307/1567080.
[45] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," 59.
[46] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," 59.
[47] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," 60.

specifies that this action should not be aggressive. Miss emphasizes experiences associated with familiar forms such as "vernacular architecture, old cities, gardens," which can be reintroduced into the city in a way that uses the "imagery and vocabulary of our current surroundings."[48] Rather than confronting the viewer, Miss wants to draw them in, and she argues that recognizable, human-scale forms do this best. At the end of the essay, she stresses that the most important difference in the new sculpture is "that the artists are attempting a dialogue with the public, going to town meetings, sitting down with planning boards, entering into very pragmatic situations…making an effort to establish an accessible visual language."[49] She asserts that truly public art cannot be conceived without consulting the public. The artist should no longer act alone on the site, as she herself had been doing before this point. This is a stark difference from the "public mode" of viewing, which depends on a singular artist orchestrating a situation into which the viewer enters. After 1982, Miss advocates that public art should not just be experienced in the "public mode" but that it needs to do a public service. By bringing the public realm into the "extended situation," the viewer must be understood as a part of a larger social and environmental situation, which is tied to the site, and the construction must negotiate between the two.

One might ask: what led Miss to incorporate public service into the "public mode"? I wish to propose that the first spur was Miss's participation in the symposium "Land Reclamation as Sculpture" in 1979. The King County Arts Commission called for artists to propose an earthwork that would revitalize Johnson Pit #30, which had been used as a gravel pit for the mining industry in Seattle. Robert Morris was selected from eleven artists' proposals, and he

[48] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," 61.
[49] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," 61.

chose to turn the gravel pit into a large, terraced earthwork that referenced both ancient practices of land terracing and the form of a strip mine, which would have been legible to the mining population in SeaTac, Washington (fig. 10). Proposals by six other artists, including Miss, for other "technologically abused" sites in the area were included in a symposium after the completion of Morris's earthwork, for which he gave the keynote address. [50] Two of the six artists received funding from the U.S. Bureau of Mines to complete their projects. The proposals and images of Morris's completed earthwork circulated in a traveling exhibition after the symposium. Morris begins the keynote speech by asking, "What is public art?"[51] Like Miss would do just a few years later, he criticizes the impulse of male artists making remote earthworks that conquered "the West," as well as the aggressive model of site-specificity associated with Richard Serra. He ends the address by discussing the problems that arise when public artists are commissioned to do work that restores the land. The two main issues he brings up are that this work is valued by its clients simply because it is the cheapest option. The second issue is that he feels this sort of work can be used as a temporary relief of guilt for destroying the environment, something to point to so that we can go on destroying the land free of moral burden. He ends the address hopeful that artists would take a more interrogatory approach to these sites, not simply healing the scars the industry has left, but acting as a reminder as well.[52]

Miss's participation in this symposium suggests to us that in the years leading up to "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture" she was taking part in conversations about how an earthwork or other piece of public art could address environmental crisis and issues of sustainability.

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[50] Robert Morris, *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture, A Project of the King County Arts Commission* (Seattle Art Museum, 1979), 11-16.
[51] Robert Morris, *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture,* 5.
[52] Robert Morris, *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture,* 16.

Morris's keynote address identifies similar paradigms of public art and offers similar critiques as Miss would, a few years later, in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." They both critique the "plop art" model and the remote earthwork. Though we see in the writing that their thinking aligns, Miss critiques the work Morris completed at SeaTac. She describes the terraced earthwork as a "wry statement: earthwork in the form of a strip mine—presumably just what many people in the land reclamation business were trying to get rid of."[53] She critiques Morris for being more involved in commentary on public art than in dialogue with the community that would be interacting with the work. Thus, for her, the work fails to fulfill the new needs of public sculpture as she defines them, because dialogue with "the viewer" should be the starting point and end goal of public art. Images and a brief description of Miss's own proposal for the 1979 symposium are included in the catalogue that circulated with the exhibition.

It is worth saying here that Miss's proposal for SeaTac, though never realized, appears to be in the same vein of *Field Rotation*: emphasizing exploratory movement and offering contrasting views of the site. The site was near the airport, and she proposed a multi part construction in which participation can be "passive—walking, sitting, viewing—or more active climbing moving through the structures." [54] This calls to mind the kind of movement prompted by *Field Rotation*. It is unclear if she engaged in a dialogue with the community. This makes sense, as it precedes her rethinking of the function of public sculpture. Nevertheless, perhaps it was the beginning of her attempt to think about how public art can reclaim land.

The second impetus for Miss to offer a new model of integrating artwork into the public realm was the controversy surrounding Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, installed at Foley Federal

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[53] Mary Miss, "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," 56.
[54] Mary Miss, *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture, A Project of the King County Arts Commission* (Seattle Art Museum, 1979), 49-53.

Plaza in 1981 (fig. 11) The 120-foot-long piece of Corten steel cut across the plaza, altering traffic flow. The sculpture was immediately controversial, and a hearing was called in 1985 by the General Services Administration to remove it. Its detractors claimed that it disrupted the social space and obstructed views of the public plaza. The result of the hearing was the removal of the sculpture in 1989. Douglas Crimp described the plaza as an "empty area whose sole function is to shuttle human traffic in and out of the buildings."[55] *Tilted Arc* made clear that the plaza was not adequately serving the employees of the surrounding buildings as a place to rest or take in air, but rather was something for city planners and company owners to point to and say, "Look, we have provided a pleasant place for you to take a break." Crimp describes Serra's work as "holding the site hostage," placing the artist's will above the inhabitants needs.[56] He justifies this approach by saying that because our society is fundamentally egotistical, and individual needs will always conflict, "Serra's work does nothing other than present us with the truth of our social condition."[57] Miss describes this kind of work as monolithic and authoritarian. Serra's *Tilted Arc* represented site specificity as community antagonism, as pointed out by art historian Miwon Kwon: "Rather than fulfilling an ameliorative function in relation to the site, *Tilted Arc* aggressively cut across and divided it." [58]

Serra's antagonistic approach is the antithesis to the public service model for which Miss advocates. Rather than fixing the problem Foley Plaza presented, Serra made it plainly obvious. Which affected the people who worked there the most. Serra said of his process, "When I conceive of a structure for a public place, a space that people walk through, I consider the traffic

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[55] Douglas Crimp, "Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity," in *Richard Serra/Sculpture,* ed. Rosalind E. Krauss (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1986), 41–57.
[56] Douglas Crimp, "Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity," 53.
[57] Douglas Crimp, "Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity," 53.
[58] Miwon Kwon, "Sitings of Public Art: Integration Versus Intervention," in O*ne Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2002), 56–99.

flow, but I do not necessarily worry about the indigenous community and the politics of the site."[59] Serra strictly separates the context of the site (urban, architectural, landscape) from its content (social, historic, governmental). To change the content of the site, Serra changes the context through his sculptures. He says public art should not be subservient to but in opposition with the existing questionable ideologies of the site. At its most extreme, Serra's approach is antagonistic to the needs of the viewer. At the very least, it is indifferent. Serra critiques artists and architects who privilege either empathy for the viewer or service to the government because they just "gotta serve somebody."[60] However, in the case of *Titled Arc,* by working in opposition to the institution that commissioned the work, the real negative effect was on the employees who had to use the plaza. In challenging the institution rather than serving it Serra abandons the viewer. When we look at Miss's work after 1982, we see her collaborating with institutions and local communities to make public art that serves the viewer. If this means her work becomes a token of the institution, to use Serra's words, then that is fine if it is serving the viewer in some way.

The Land Reclamation as Sculpture Symposium and the controversy surrounding *Tilted Arc* show us that by 1982 Miss was engaged in conversations about how public sculpture can *serve* a community without becoming mere decoration. Miss redefined the terms of her practice in contrast to the ecological and antagonistic paradigms of site-specific work. The scholars examined in the literature review have tended to downplay or elide the differences between Miss's works of the 70s and her work of the 1980s and onward, reading the pronounced ecological aims of the latter *into* the former. By examining this period of transition carefully and

[59] Richard Serra, "Notes from Sight Point Road," Perspecta 19 (1982): 179, https://doi.org/10.2307/1567060.
[60] Richard Serra, "Notes from Sight Point Road," 178.

locating Miss within the public art discourse of the time, the differences between the "public mode" of viewing and art that serves the public are made clear. The redefinition of the site, the construction, and the viewer are at stake.

One of the works that is representative of Miss's new commitments is *Greenwood Pond: Double Site*, commissioned by the Des Moines Arts Center for a pond on their grounds (fig. 12). Like *Field Rotation,* it features descents, various pathways, though its forms are curvilinear rather than strictly orthogonal. Miss describes this construction as the "ideal project." Because of its location and previous use, it presented the opportunity to collaborate with various local institutions, such as the Founders Garden Club, the Arts Center, and the science center nearby.[61] The site, a kidney bean-shaped pond, had previously been used for picnicking, fishing, walking, and ice-skating. The pond had recently become clogged with algae, and the picnicking areas had fallen into disrepair. Here Miss had the opportunity to revitalize the ecological and social functions of the site. In its current state the pond "necessitated dredging, filtration dams upstream, and cleansing vegetation."[62] Her interaction with the site in Des Moines then is quite different than it was at *Field Rotation*. Here she not only used the construction to change the physical experience of the land, but she also revitalized the site to serve a new social and sustainable function, which became bound to the embodied experience the work produced. Miss has redefined the site to encompass not only topography, but also ecological condition, history, and the social context. The viewer is no longer understood as mere body or unmarked subject. Rather Miss attempts to affect a change in their consciousness about their place in a larger ecosystem, be that social or environmental. The various programs housed in Miss's constructions

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[61] Mary Miss, "Interview with Mary Miss," Interview by Christian Zapatka, *Lotus International* 88, (1996): 34-49.
[62] Daniel M. Abramson, "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement," in *Mary Miss,* ed. Mark Lamster (Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 33-53.

facilitated this change. The construction Miss created at Greenwood Pond has been described as an "outdoor classroom"[63] because of the educational programs that the construction houses. The viewer is still supposed to explore the component parts freely, but these parts now serve multiple programs as requested by multiple clients.

Daniel Abramson provides us with a vivid description of *Double Site.* He tells us that Miss, along with her collaborators, constructed a functional wetland including "a water lily area, a woodland wildflower walk, a stone-banked terrace of prairie grass, and a wet meadow planted with cattails,"[64] which revived the derelict pond. The construction stakes out a leaf shape, negotiating between the pond and the shore. Moving along the shore, there are "five open-framed arched trellises that form a structure arcing in two-degree shifts to follow the curve of the shore."[65] These trellises terminate in a covered pavilion. As in others of Miss's constructions, the pavilion appears almost unfinished, like the framework for a building under construction. Here Miss fulfills the need expressed by community members for a covered space in her characteristic style. On the northernmost edge of the pond, there is a tower one can climb up to look out over the pond and the construction. This is one of the spaces Miss created that could serve as a place for an individual to view the wetland or a place for programming, addressing both the individual experience of the "public mode" and the public realm. On the northern edge of the pond, there are two walkways: one that takes the viewer to the edge of the pond and one that descends into the water where it meets a row of poles that mirror the curving shape of the shoreline. On the other side of the construction is a concrete trough that extends into the pond (fig. 13). The lip of

[63] The Cultural Landscape Foundation. "Greenwood Pond: Double Site." *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*. Accessed December 22, 2024. https://www.tclf.org/greenwood-pond-double-site.
[64] Daniel M. Abramson, "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement," 44-45.
[65] Daniel M. Abramson, "Mary Miss and the Art of Engagement," 44-45.

this trough meets the surface of the pond, making the viewer feel as if they are in between the space of the land and the water. Sitting on the bench in the trough, the viewer's eyes directly meet the plane of the water. This serves an educational function, allowing the viewer to observe the plant and animal life of the pond up close. This is another characteristic feature of Miss's constructions—a transitional space between above and below—adapted by Miss to serve a dual educational and phenomenological function. Next to the viewing trough is a terraced seating area, which could either be used by the community in an educational context or provide a place for the viewer to sit in solitude and gaze out over the pond. Miss said in an interview in 1994: "One of my primary things is trying to make intimate spaces within the public domain, make a connection between public life and interior life."[66] It is important to clarify that this is not the same intimacy Morris writes about. The "intimate mode" Morris defines involves small-scale sculpture that is experienced in a limited rather than expanded situation. A work like *Double Site* can still be experienced in the "public mode," which is based on the individual's perception and embodied experience. While pieces of the construction were based on what local institutions requested, centered around the educational function of the demonstration wetland, there are still moments where the individual is prompted to reflect upon the condition of their body in space as it explores the site. Miss wants to create public art that combines embodied experiences with social, educational, and sustainable programs that cause the viewer to reflect on their position in the ecosystem. Though the morphological language of her work is quite similar to that of *Field Rotation*, the site has come to encompass not just the topography but also the social and ecological conditions that predated Miss's intervention.

[66] Mary Miss, "Mary Miss, Interview," Interview by Anne Barclay Morgan, *Art Papers* 18, (1994): 20-25.

The terms of the "extended situation"—the construction, the site, and the viewer—continue to anchor her practice. However, their definitions have expanded even further in this phase of Miss's practice, as this section of my thesis has shown. By identifying these three terms of the extended situation in Miss's works, we see that as embodied experience ceases to be an end in itself, the form and function of the construction begins to change. I argue that the model for her work shifts from the playground, which emphasizes physical interaction and play, to the classroom, which is oriented toward education and effecting a change in consciousness. I argue that around 1982, when Miss writes "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," she is in the process of transitioning between these two models. *Field Rotation,* in its form and function, represents the playground. By moving their body through the construction, the viewer comes to understand the topography. *Greenwood Pond: Double Site* represents a playground/classroom hybrid: the viewer still comes to understand the landscape by freely exploring the parts of the construction, but those parts now house various educational programs.

Site, Viewer, Information System: City as Living Laboratory

At *Greenwood Pond: Double Site,* the definitions of the construction, site, and viewer expanded, moving beyond a purely phenomenological understanding of these terms. Miss's work was no longer just viewed in the "public mode" but was a part of the public realm and served *the* public. That was in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, Miss's practice has transformed again, and the terms expanded even further. Though the site and the viewer are defined similarly as in *Greenwood Pond*, as her work has moved fully out of the playground and into the classroom, the term construction is no longer representative of the function of the physical manifestations of Miss's work.

Greenwood Pond: Double Site takes the form of what I have termed the playground in Miss's practice, but it serves the educational function of the classroom. Works made under the City as Living Laboratory (CaLL) framework, Miss's current focus, represent the classroom in form and function. To define the physical elements of a CaLL project as constructions would be inaccurate. The term construction is related to the architectural quality of Miss's work, which produced an embodied experience of the site. After 1982, Miss began to incorporate educational programming into her constructions. The programming related to a CaLL work, however, is no longer bound to the architectural frame the construction provided. The programs have come to outgrow the built work, and correspondingly, it has become smaller in scale, resembling markers or signage that is meant to deliver information and catch the viewer's attention. If, in the works before 1982, the viewer's experience of the site and the construction converged only in their embodied experience, then in the certain CaLL works the viewer's experience of the site and the information converges in the programming surrounding a given work, which is not necessarily bound to Miss's physical intervention at the site. In this chapter I will examine the CaLL framework and some of its representative works to argue that as the work becomes less about the public mode of viewing à la Morris and more about the public realm, it changes in both form and function to an outdoor classroom, which makes the construction, as we have come to understand it, obsolete in favor of the systems used to deliver information.

City as a Living Laboratory was founded by Miss in 2011 and remains active more than a decade later. CaLL was inspired by six "groundwork" projects/proposals, made before CaLL's official founding, which Miss understands as fulfilling the charge she laid out in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture" for accessible, collaborative, non-monolithic sculpture integrated into the urban fabric. In the early 2000s she was developing *Park as Living*

Laboratory in Orange County, which was a proposal to turn a park into a research and residency center where artists and scientists could work together to make issues of sustainability tangible through public art in the park. The project did not come to fruition, but Miss wanted to continue exploring how artists and scientists could collaborate on sustainable public art at a larger scale. Shortly after this, with the money from a cancelled project in Indianapolis, she founded City as Living Laboratory. Though Miss is the founder of CaLL and creates under this framework, she is not the sole author of any work; she is always collaborating with other artists, scientists, community organizations, etc. She wanted to create a framework to help other artists get their ideas out in public. The mission of CaLL and an outline for how artists should be integrated into the public are presented in a booklet produced for the New York City Department of Design and Construction. The mission statement of CaLL is as follows:

> CaLL/City as Living Laboratory combines the skills and perspectives of artists and designers with those of scientists and citizens to increase awareness and action around key environmental issues. Through active exploration, direct experience, and interdisciplinary strategies, CaLL facilitates deeper understanding of natural systems and infrastructure and offers opportunities to reimagine urban life in ways that will make it more resilient.[67]

CaLL's mission answers the call to action given in "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." It also has qualities of New Genre Public Art, most thoroughly defined by Suzanne Lacy in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* published in 1995 (one year before *Double Site* was completed). Miss's work from the 1990s was a part of the New Genre Public Art discourse.

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[67] Mary Miss. *City as Living Laboratory: Sustainability Made Tangible Through the Arts*. New York: Department of Design and Construction.

Though CaLL did not exist yet, it shares principles with New Genre Public Art, and the discourse from the 1990s raises interesting questions we can apply to CaLL. Both artists and scholars were grappling with how to differently engage in the public post-Serra, Smithson, and "plop art." Lucy Lippard, who wrote on Miss's early work, cited at the beginning of this thesis, stated in an essay in *Mapping the Terrain* that not all work that is physically in public deserves the name public art, which for her is defined as "accessible work of any kind that cares about, challenges, involves, and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment."[68] Anything else, no matter how physically exposed, is private, according to this logic.

The tagline of CaLL is "sustainability made tangible through the arts."[69] This is done in several ways, one of which is the installation of didactic materials on sites in the form of signage or mapping implements. Another is programming such as community walks or workshops which can occur at the site of the signage or elsewhere. The third is project proposals. The goal of CaLL is not to place art objects in public, but rather to have artists be the drivers of public experiences, which range from physical interventions on sites to ephemeral educational programs led by artists. The section of the booklet Miss produced for the Department of Design and Construction on how to "engage" the public states that "rather than the conventional use of interpretive signage or directives, visceral, physical, or emotional experiences engage people."[70] But the physical implements of CaLL do in fact resemble signage. Because the content of the CaLL works is so specific and the goal of CaLL is to educate, the sign becomes necessary to

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[68] Lucy Lippard, "Looking Around: Where We Are, Where We Could Be," in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* edited by Suzanne Lacy, (Bay Press, 1995), 121.
[69] Mary Miss. *City as Living Laboratory: Sustainability Made Tangible Through the Arts*. New York: Department of Design and Construction.
[70] Mary Miss. *City as Living Laboratory: Sustainability Made Tangible Through the Arts*, 3.

communicate clearly with the viewer in busy public spaces. In an interview with Miss, conducted by Ed Wall, landscape architect and professor and Harvard School of Design, Wall states that combining the principles of Miss's artistic practice with public places, people, infrastructure, and environment is "a messier practice than the recognizable and well photographed work that marks the early part of her career."[71] Correspondingly, perhaps, there has been little scholarship on this phase of her career so far. It is tempting to focus only on the earlier works due to their quiet grandeur and striking aerial views. I, however, want to use a phrase from the New Genre Public Art discourse, intention versus effect, to evaluate the formal language that is used to carry out the social/educational programs of CaLL projects.[72]

One of the six "groundwork projects" that Miss identifies as generating the idea for CaLL was *Connect the Dots,* 2007, Boulder, Colorado (fig. 14). Through marking and mapping the project attempts to make visible the environmental crisis that happened at the site in the past and that is predicted to happen in the present. The subject of the project is the 1894 flood, "an event outside of contemporary memory or experience, which inundated the city of Boulder."[73] Though there is a 0.1% chance of a 100-year flood in any given year, new weather patterns, due in part to climate change, make events such as this even more unpredictable. Because of its location, Boulder is more susceptible to them. In the project description, Miss states, "it is not a question of if there will be a flood but when."[74] In collaboration with geologist Peter W. Birkeland, University of Colorado at Boulder, hydrologist Sheila Murphy, and US Geological Survey, Miss

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[71] Ed Wall, "Constellations Versus Hero: A Conversation with Mary Miss," *Journal of the British Academy* 9, suppl. 5 (2021): 7–28, https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.007.
[72] Arlene Raven, "Word of Honor" in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* edited by Suzanne Lacy, (Bay Press, 1995): 159-171.

[73] Mary Miss. *Connect the Dots: Mapping the Highwater Hazards and History of Boulder Creek*. Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007.
[74] Mary Miss. *Connect the Dots,* 3.

"brought the historic hazard back to present consciousness,"[75] or such is the claim. Blue circles approximately ten inches in diameter were placed on trees, fences, and municipal buildings at the estimated height of the previous flood, marking out the flood plain for the viewer. Seating areas next to some of the waterways in Boulder were also installed. Though the dots were installed, other elements of this project were never realized. One of these was the online Geographic Information Systems (GIS) portion, which would have provided access to more detailed information about the flood's history as well as continually updated data from the present. Miss claims that "looking from one point to the next, connecting the dots, the level and severity of a flood is no longer abstract."[76] In this project we see Miss developing the tools and visual language that would define the works produced under the CaLL framework. What often appears are the markers of the map enlarged. By moving around and connecting the dots the viewer will be able to make a mental map of the flood plain, gaining awareness of their position in the ecosystem. However, what becomes evident in the next work is that such content may not be entirely legible without robust programming and didactics. The blue dot on its own, as it appeared in this project, may in fact have been too abstract to carry the contextual weight that Miss wanted it to. But one might grant the benefit of the doubt because the project was not completed.

The next work was the culmination of the goals of CaLL and expanded upon the visual language that Miss experimented with in Boulder. *Broadway: 1000 Steps* was initiated by Miss under the CaLL framework in 2013 and is supposedly ongoing. Located in New York City, the completed project is projected to run the length of Broadway, New York's longest street,

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[75] Mary Miss. *Connect the Dots,* 3.
[76] City as Living Laboratory. "Groundwork: Connect the Dots." *City as Living Laboratory*. Accessed December 20, 2024. https://www.cityaslivinglab.org/groundwork-connect-the-dots.

activating "hubs" where social, ecological, and infrastructural elements of the built fabric are highlighted for the viewer (fig. 15). Convex mirrors are paired with color-coded discs based on what facet of urban life that hub is pointing out, such as land, air, water, energy, waste, or life. Corresponding text is written backward on the back side of the colored disc so that when looking in the mirror, not only does the viewer see themselves in relation to the element of the urban fabric, but they can also pause to read and learn more about that feature of the city. Miss describes this process as the viewer's "decoding" of the built environment. The hubs are supposed to grab the viewers' attention as they walk down the street, so they stop to consider their position in relation to the infrastructure of the city. If the viewer chooses, they can engage even further by calling a phone number or downloading an app that provides audio with more information. These hubs convey information to the viewer about geography, their location in the city, but also about where their drinking water comes from, how they have electricity, or where their waste goes. To gather all of this information, Miss not only had to work with the city but also collaborated with the Center for Research on Environmental Decisions at the Earth Institute of Columbia University, the CUNY Environmental Crossroads Initiative, the Institute for Sustainable Cities at CUNY, the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, the Wallerstein Collaborative for Environmental Education at NYU, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.[77] The collaborative, conversation-first model she advocated for in 1982 materialized in the CaLL framework.

If and when completed, *Broadway: 1000 Steps* will feature twenty hubs, akin to the pilot installation installed at 137th Street. However, the most recent event was an artist-led walk in

[77] Mary Miss. *Broadway: 1000 Steps*. New York: Mary Miss Studio, 2013. Accessed December 20, 2024. http://www.broadway1000steps.com/broadway1000steps.pdf.

2017, and there has been no update on the project since then. The CaLL/Walks programs are a central part of the CaLL framework, intended to educate the viewer about an environmental condition specific to the site. In *Broadway: 1000 Steps,* artists and scientists led public, community walks through neighborhoods, focusing on a particular ecological or social issue specific to an area along Broadway. CaLL/Walks programming took place regularly along Broadway in areas where hubs were to be installed from 2013 to 2017. The walks function to "introduce ourselves to neighborhoods…and introduce neighborhoods to us and introduce artists to scientists or historians or others."[78] The walks are intended to extend outside of programming initiated by the CaLL organization; anyone can download a reproducible toolkit to replicate the walks anywhere. The toolkit provides instructions to plan a public walk, starting from how to select a location, find an artist, map the route, and manage the logistics on the day of the walk.

Though the walks are not dependent on a "construction" as we have come to define it, the Broadway project features physical hubs. *Broadway: 1000 Steps* is a combination of permanent and ephemeral systems of information. The hubs crystalize the information on the street, providing the opportunity for random encounter, and ephemeral programming like walks and talks serve to engage the community further, supplementing what the sign cannot convey on its own. These systems of information serve to make the viewer more aware of the processes of the urban environment over time.

But what are the aesthetics of this sort of pedagogy? Most of the works produced by Miss under the CaLL framework incorporate these convex mirrors, brightly colored poles, text in brightly colored circles, and a technological component. The physical manifestations of CaLL

[78]Ed Wall, "Constellations Versus Hero: A Conversation with Mary Miss,"14.

projects resemble map markers enlarged to human scale. (fig. 16). Miss spoke in an interview about wanting to make fun of the pins on a Google map.[79] The mapping idea is apt, as the goal of many CaLL works is to create a mental map by way of exploring the various locations of a given project. In this way, the resemblance to Google Map pins is earnest, rather than parodic, given the goals of the projects. Since the implements are attention-grabbing, as a street sign is meant to be, they do not draw the viewer in slowly or by subtle formal means. An aerial photo, a characteristic means of capturing Miss's early works, would not serve a CaLL hub in the same way. But a schematized map of the hubs' locations provides the viewer with more information about Broadway, for example.

Scholars writing about New Genre Public Art are concerned with the ideas of intention versus effect and what role aesthetics plays in making art with an educative function. Arlene Raven asks, "Do artists with good intentions have an edge on making good art?"[80] She says that much of the work with a social or ecological agenda is of high aesthetic quality, but so is some of the work with no social agenda in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art.[81] Likewise, Suzanne Lacy asks, "Does shape, eloquence, or visual appeal take precedence over the work's accessibility to community residents?" The CaLL works are accessible and eye-catching and must be to serve their function. They look entirely different from Miss's work of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, because the sign is more effective than a multi-part construction when the artist is less interested in affecting the body and more interested in affecting social consciousness. With the robust programming, there is little question that the

[79] Ed Wall, "Constellations Versus Hero: A Conversation with Mary Miss," 14.
[80] Arlene Raven, "Word of Honor" in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* edited by Suzanne Lacy, (Bay Press, 1995): 168.
[81] Arlene Raven, "Word of Honor," 167-168.

intention of the work would be clear, but would the work be equally effective for the random passerby, who stumbled upon one of the CaLL works? In the case with *Connect the Dots,* which was not fully realized, the public was intended to "experience the potential threat of the waters on a visceral level."[82] But what, one might ask, is threatening about a blue dot? How does the viewer understand that the blue dot represents a flood, if they do not choose to do further research? In *Broadway: 1000 Steps,* more text and programming were used to help solve this issue of legibility. Miss describes a critique of the work she received when someone saw a passerby putting on their lipstick in one of the mirrors. To that she said, "Great, that somebody was going to stop, check themselves out, and guess what, they're going to see something that they hadn't necessarily intended to see."[83] She did a test in a park in her neighborhood with a hub and noticed something similar but then described people doing double takes at the text reflected in the mirror. If the mirror stops people momentarily for practical reasons and they then happen to reflect on an element of their world they had taken for granted, then the project has been effective, according to Miss.[84] A framework for art making, such as CaLL, places pedagogy first and offers a plethora of content to convey its mission, as seen on its extensive web page.[85] There is value in understanding the claims the CaLL framework puts forth, but we still can and should question its effectiveness. In its stated intentions and project descriptions we see how CaLL proposes to fulfill the charge of "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture." However, CaLL

[82] Mary Miss. *Connect the Dots,* 3.
[83] Mary Miss, interview by City Atlas, September 30, 2012, *City Atlas*, "Broadway: 1000 Steps," https://newyork.thecityatlas.org/people/mary-miss.
[84] Mary Miss, interview by City Atlas, September 30, 2012, *City Atlas*, "Broadway: 1000 Steps," https://newyork.thecityatlas.org/people/mary-miss.
[85] *City as Living Lab*, accessed February 28, 2025, https://www.cityaslivinglab.org/.

is only successful in so far as the viewer can understand the information they are being presented with, which may not be possible without the robust programming.

Let us return here to the terms of construction, site, and viewer. These terms have grounded my analysis of Miss's practice. By defining them at specific points in her career, I have argued that her early work emphasizes the embodied experience of the constructions installed outside of the gallery walls; thus, the term space from Morris became the site for Miss, and the object became the construction. But these terms still operated in a similar way to the "expanded situation" of the gallery. Though the experience happened in the "public mode," Miss was not making a commentary or doing work in service of the public. After Miss delivers "On a Redefinition of Public Sculpture," we see these terms expand as Miss makes art that is both sustainable and phenomenologically complex, as in *Greenwood Pond: Double Site*. The terms are redefined once again under the CaLL framework. The organization emphasizes ecological content, and the experience of embodied viewing has been superseded by educational goals, moving Miss's practice fully into the model of the outdoor classroom. In the classroom, the site is understood for all its social, ecological, and historical context, and the viewer is understood as a part of a larger social and environmental system. But what are the implications for the construction?

CaLL programming does not necessarily require a built project to accompany it. As an organization, CaLL prompts artists to engage the viewer with their environment apart from a built piece of public art. Viewer and site still apply, but as embodied experience is no longer a result of the triad of terms coming together through movement, construction is no longer the most apt term, even though some projects have physical elements. In Des Moines, *Double Site's* construction housed its various programs, but in the case of CaLL it is the organization rather

than any physical on-site construction that houses the various programs. And within individual projects, it is the sign or the programming that delivers the information. Thus, we see the terms of the situation change once more. The formal interventions in the "expanded situation" of CaLL, like the object in Morris's expanded situation, have become less self-important because the content and the programming have exceeded the permanent physical intervention on the site. Since the experience converges in the programs or didactic material an architectural framework is no longer necessary because Miss is not trying to manipulate the body but rather effect a change in consciousness through mediated systems of communication. I put forth that in the current phase of Miss's career, the expanded situation is made up of the site, the viewer, and the information system. This information system could be the sign that bears information about a certain site, a walk led by an artist or scientist, an application the viewer accesses on their phone, or other programming produced under CaLL. How information is delivered and how effective it is can vary from project to project, but the goal is always to educate the viewer on a site-specific issue of sustainability, representing the full move out of the playground and into the classroom. As Miss redefined the role of the public artist, she also redefined the tools of the public artist.

Conclusion

Let us return here to the idea of the "extremely clear situation," a phrase Miss used to characterize her early work, cited in the literature review section. What the works before 1982 made clear was how the viewer perceives the landscape corporeally. She accomplished this by making constructions that presented the viewer with contrasting information when their body was in stillness, as opposed to when it was in motion. Through projects and programming, CaLL

purports to "decode the natural environment."[86] From this claim we can infer that what CaLL wants to make clear is an ecological condition and the viewer's relationship to it. CaLL makes the situation of the viewer and their environment clear through education in order to bring sustainability to the forefront of the viewer's mind in their daily lives. However, what I have been exploring is the possibility that the built work made under CaLL may be falling short of making the situation clear. In the same essay from which this phrase comes, Lippard cites Miss's critique of minimalism, which "put the most theoretical weight on the least complicated physical object."[87] The theoretical weight Miss refers to here is, of course, different, and the framework for making art in public under CaLL is complex. But the sign as a form is not physically complex, and it is being used in the built projects of CaLL to deliver a substantial amount of complex information to the viewer. The sign is the only permanent, physical access point for the information in the CaLL works, and as evidenced by all the programming that comes with a given CaLL project, it seems the sign alone cannot carry all the information required to make the situation clear.

That being said, the accessibility and outreach of the CaLL projects and programs move further towards making public art that does a public service. Through CaLL, Miss is taking public art off its pedestal and into the streets and asking the viewer to dismantle what we think public art is. Lippard's one critique of *Battery Park Landfill* is its inaccessibility.[88] Because of the scale and frontality of the construction, it demands "space and a real isolation from both art and life."[89] Lippard acknowledges the work likely would not have been as effective elsewhere

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[86] Mary Miss. *City as Living Laboratory: Sustainability Made Tangible Through the Arts*. New York: Department of Design and Construction.
[87]Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," 210.
[88] Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," 212
[89] Lippard, "Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation," 212

but says, “Just because it was so effective, I wish more people could have had the chance to be lured into it.”[90] It is this inaccessibility from public life, demanded by her monumental works, that Miss sought to change after 1982. She began installing works in ordinary, heavily populated spaces, trying to address issues of everyday life. Subsequently, the works shrank to meet the viewer on the scale of their day-to-day life. Therefore, in the CaLL works, physical accessibility is gained at the potential risk of losing some of the information, which Miss hopes will be mitigated through programming.

Greenwood Pond: Double Site I argue, is one of the best examples of the merging of the informational and the phenomenological. It is fairly accessible, located on a site that was already in use by the public. Through collaboration with scientists as well as the local community, Miss built a construction that served sustainable, educational, and phenomenological functions. It is an elegant marriage of the playground and the classroom. However, the project took seven years to realize, given the collaborations, planning, constructing, and restoring of the wetland. Miss describes the work as “one of her favorite projects” in the interview with Ed Wall and said she would have loved to “keep building things in the world, but it was just not possible.”[91] She describes the frustration she felt in the 1990s spending years on other proposals, similar to *Double Site,* that did not happen. That is how CaLL came about; Miss realized that ephemeral, social, and frankly, smaller works were the ones she was able to complete. Even if there is a chance they are not received in their intended manner, they have more potential to create the change Miss wants to see because they are more likely to be completed.

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[90] Lippard, “Mary Miss: An Extremely Clear Situation,” 212
[91] Ed Wall, “Constellations Versus Hero: A Conversation with Mary Miss,” 16.

As I have been writing this paper, there has been an ongoing lawsuit between Mary Miss and the Des Moines Arts Center regarding the demolition of *Greenwood Pond: Double Site.* In December of 2023, Miss was notified that the arts center was planning to demolish the work, as many areas of the construction had fallen into disrepair and were described as "dangerous and unsalvageable."[92] On April 4, 2024, Miss filed a lawsuit against the arts center, seeking monetary damages, on the grounds that the dilapidated state of the construction was a breach of the contract signed in 1994. The lawsuit put a temporary stop to the demolition of the work, and many artists, museums, and architects came forward against the work being demolished. In early January 2025, the lawsuit was settled, and Miss will receive $900,000, and the arts center will proceed with dismantling the work. The story of *Greenwood Pond/Double Site* speaks to the challenges of realizing and maintaining public art that is more than "plop art." That is where the programs and projects made under CaLL prevail. Though some of the built elements fall short of conveying their messaging, as a sign can only teach so much, the programs and the smaller works are more likely to be realized. Public art for Miss is no longer about the construction or the object but about a process of change-making interactions with people. CaLL breaks down boundaries of what we consider public art and experiences with art in public to be. It may not always manifest in a way that is clear, and I hope this paper has offered a critique of that, but what is clear is that Miss and other artists creating under CaLL are trying in earnest to work *with* the public, with all its complexities, as opposed to just *in* public.

[92] "Settlement Talks Stalled: What's Next for the Greenwood Pond Double Site?" *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*, last modified November 4, 2024, https://www.tclf.org/settlement-talks-stalled-whats-next-greenwood-pond-double-site.

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Figures

Figure 1 Mary Miss, Battery Park Landfill, 1973, Battery Park City Landfill, New York. https://marymiss.com/projects/battery-park-landfill/. No longer extant.

Figure 2 Mary Miss, Streamlines: Indianapolis/ City as Living Lab (I/CaLL), 2015, The White River, Indianapolis, Indiana. https://marymiss.com/projects/streamlines-indianapolis-city-as-living-lab-icall/. Installations at Pogues Run, Holy Cross at Vermont street, Indianapolis, Indiana, is still active.

Figure 3 Mary Miss, Streamlines: Indianapolis/ City as Living Lab (I/CaLL), 2015, The White River, Indianapolis, Indiana. https://marymiss.com/projects/streamlines-indianapolis-city-as-living-lab-icall/. Installations at Pogues Run, Holy Cross at Vermont street, Indianapolis, Indiana, is still active.

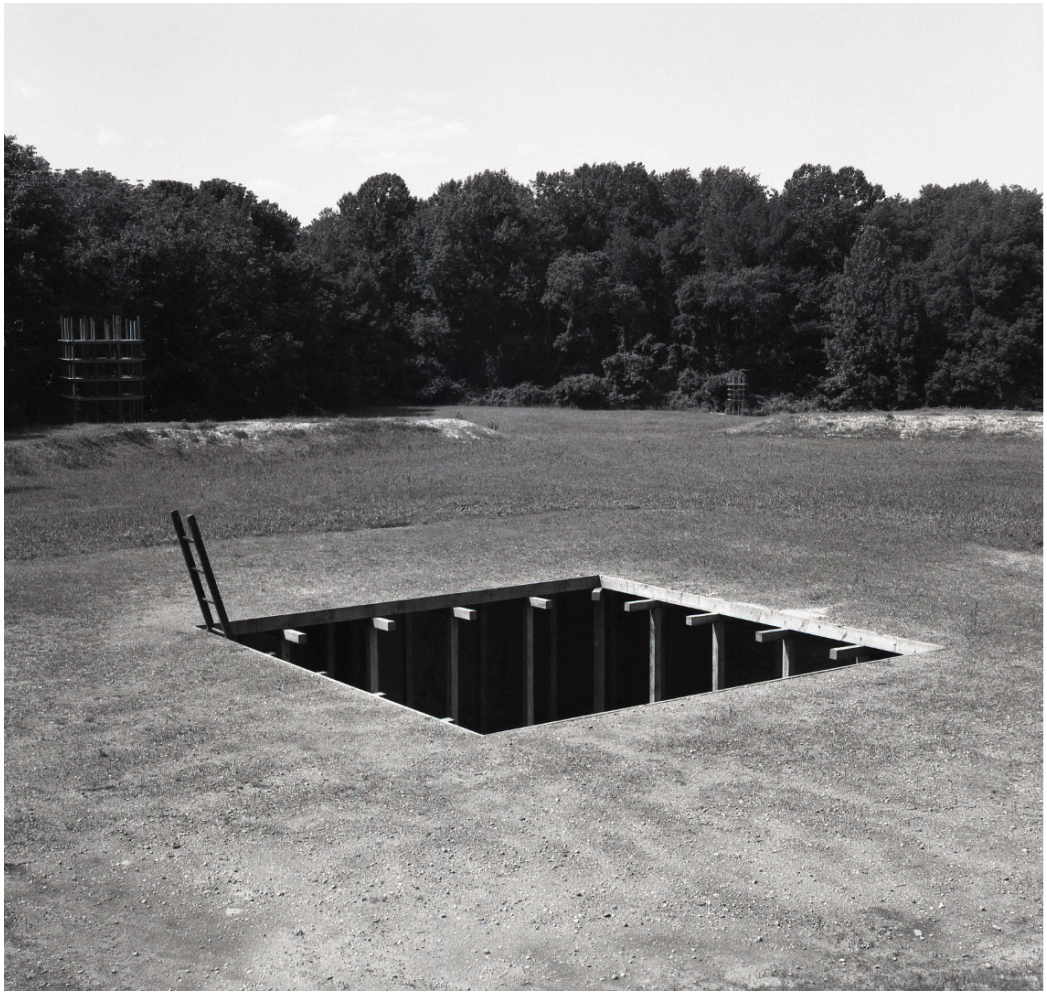

Figure 4 Mary Miss, Perimeters, Pavilions, Decoy, 1977-78, Nassau County Museum, Roslyn, New York. https://marymiss.com/projects/perimeterspavilionsdecoys/. No longer extant.

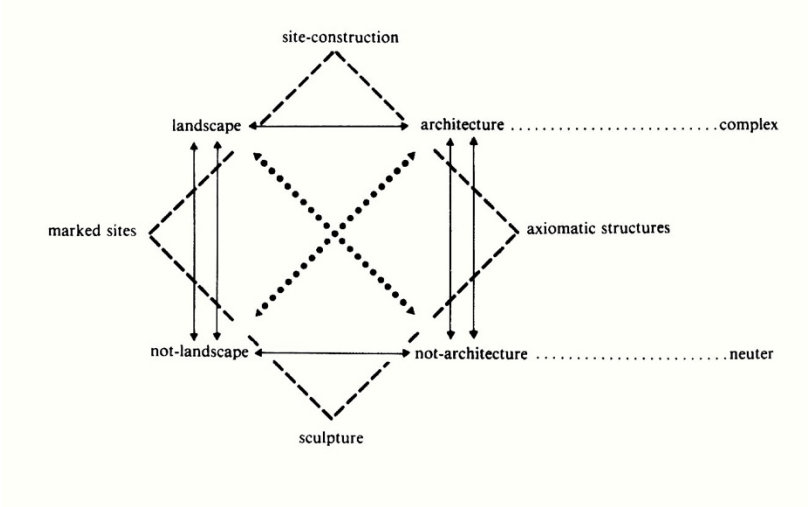

Figure 5 Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," October 8, Volume 8 (Spring 1979): 30–31, The MIT Press, https://doi.org/10.2307/778224.

Figure 6 Mary Miss, Staged Gates, 1979, Dayton Ohio. https://marymiss.com/projects/staged-gates/. Installation is still active.

Figure 7 Mary Miss, Field Rotation, 1980-81, Governors State University, Illinois. From Schjeldahl, Peter. The Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park. Governors State University Foundation, 1987. Installation is still active.

Figure 8 Mary Miss, Field Rotation, 1980-81, Governors State University, Illinois. https://marymiss.com/projects/field-rotation/. Installation is still active.

Figure 9 Mary Miss, Field Rotation, 1980-81, Governors State University, Illinois. Installation is still active.

Figure 10 Robert Morris, Earthwork Johnson Pit #30, Washington. https://preservewa.org/most_endangered/robert-morris-earthwork/. Installation is still active.

Figure 11 Richard Serra, Tilted Arc, 1981-89, Foley Federal Plaza, New York. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/richard-serra-1923/lost-art-richard-serra. Removed in 1989.

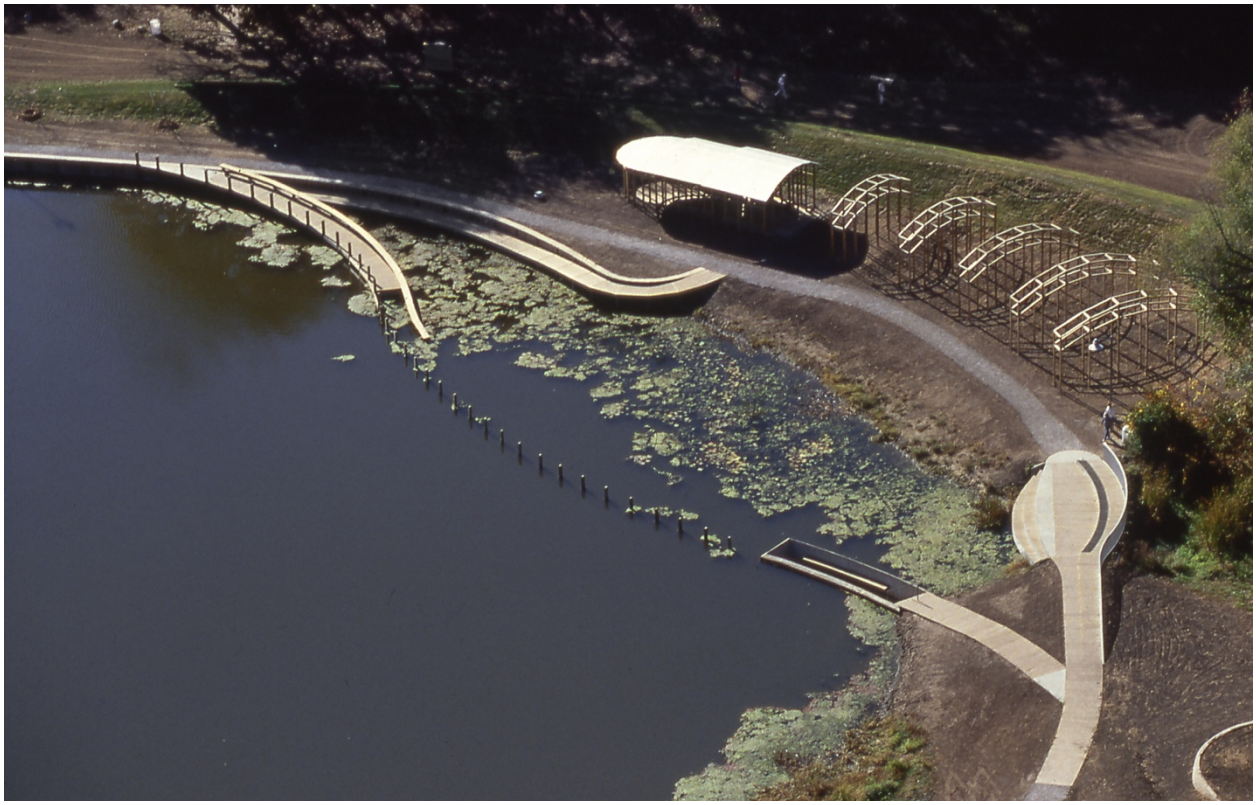

Figure 12 Greenwood Pond: Double Site, 1986-1989, Des Moines, Iowa. https://marymiss.com/projects/greenwood-pond-double-site/. Currently being removed.

Figure 13 Greenwood Pond: Double Site, 1986-1989, Des Moines, Iowa. https://marymiss.com/projects/greenwood-pond-double-site/. Currently being removed.

Figure 14 Mary Miss, Connect the Dots, 2007, Boulder, Colorado. https://marymiss.com/projects/connect-the-dots/. No Longer Extant.

Figure 15 Mary Miss/City as a Living Laboratory, Broadway: 1000 Steps, 2009-ongoing, Broadway, New York. https://marymiss.com/projects/broadway-1000-steps/. Temporary Pilot Hub.

Figure 16 Mary Miss/City as a Living Laboratory, FLOW(Can You See the River), 2008-2011, Indianapolis, Indiana. https://www.cityaslivinglab.org/flow. Part of a temporary exhibition with the Indianapolis Museum of Art.