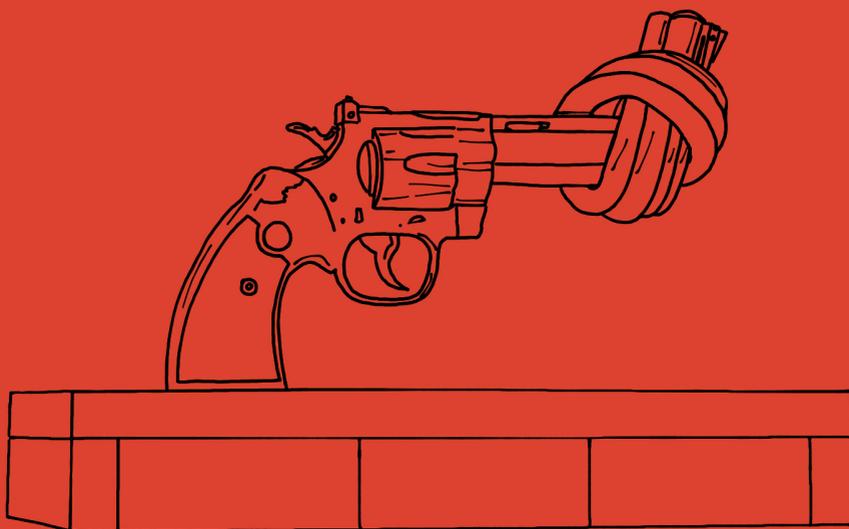




POLDRA
VAN SIZE PUBLIC ART

A VISION ON... ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

TEXT RUI MACÁRIO RIBEIRO
ILLUSTRATIONS PEDRO PIRES



POLDRA - VAN SIZE PUBLIC ART

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PEDRO PIRES

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or "The Knotted Gun" (1984)

A VISION ON... ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

TEXT **RUI MACÁRIO RIBEIRO**

ILLUSTRATIONS **PEDRO PIRES**

POLDRA - "CURADOR JÚNIOR" PROGRAM



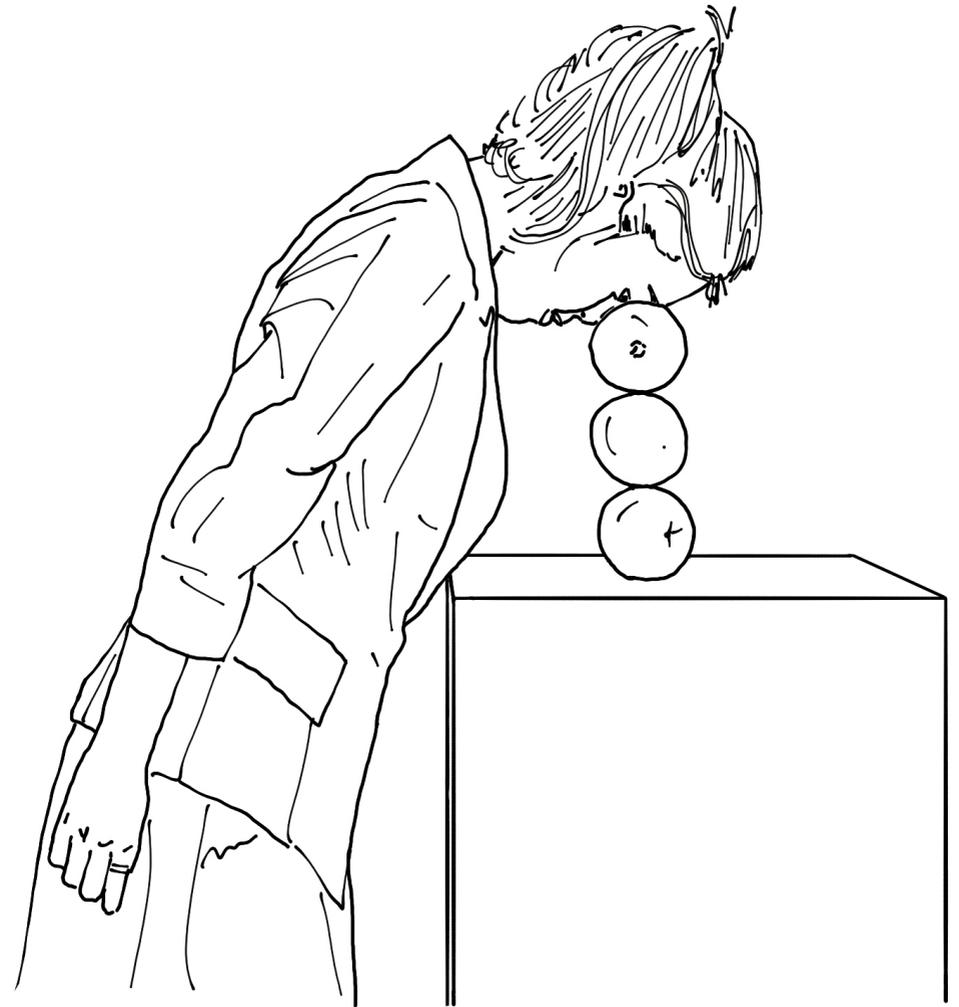
There are many beautiful things in the world...that are beautiful. Take flowers, for example. Beauty is in almost everything—once you see it or find it, it is now there, right in front of you! Some ancient thinkers affirm that what is beautiful is also good and true...all at the same time!

Damien Hirst in his studio with a painting painting from the “Cherry Blossoms” series.

Beauty, even so, is not Art. Art is a strange word and something difficult to explain, but that is what we are going to try here, with our words alongside our images.

To be understandable, let us proceed slowly and in parts:

Erwin Wurm, "Astronomical Purpose",
One Minute Sculptures series (2014/2019).



POINT 1

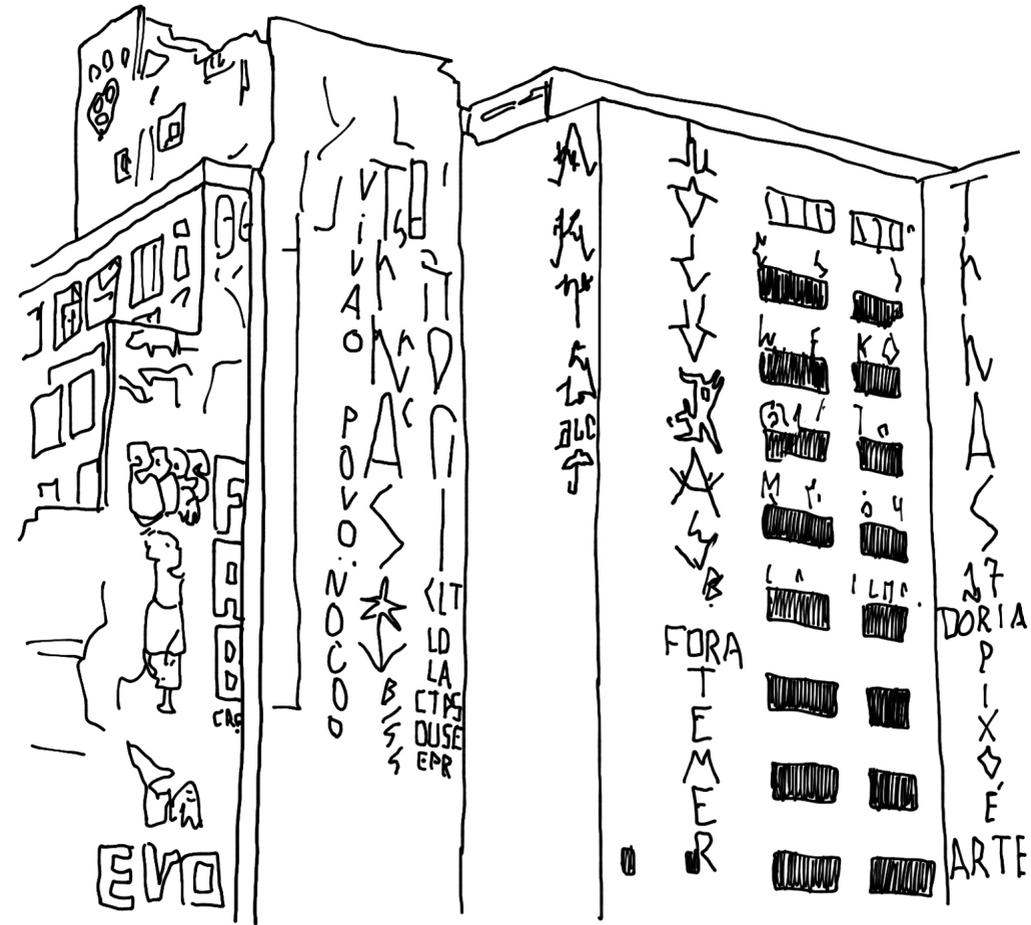
For there to be Art, someone must want to create Art. There has to be intention, having the will to make or create Art. It cannot be by chance or accident — when you want a drawing of a flower, it cannot result in a drawing of a tree. If you want to draw, you do not sculpt.

Pedro Cabrita Reis at the studio in Rua do Açúcar.



POINT 2

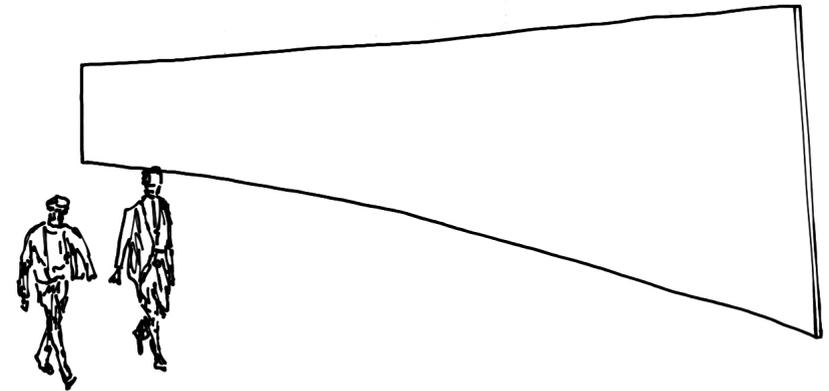
We call something Art when that something makes us stop and think. Whether we like or dislike it; whether we accept or reject it. What is Art causes us to be different than who we were before, a few seconds before, after we have seen or touched or heard that something. Art changes us and can change the world-view of the individual person.



Intervention on the facade of the Terminal
Bandeira in São Paulo, Brazil (2017). Movimento PixAção.

POINT 3

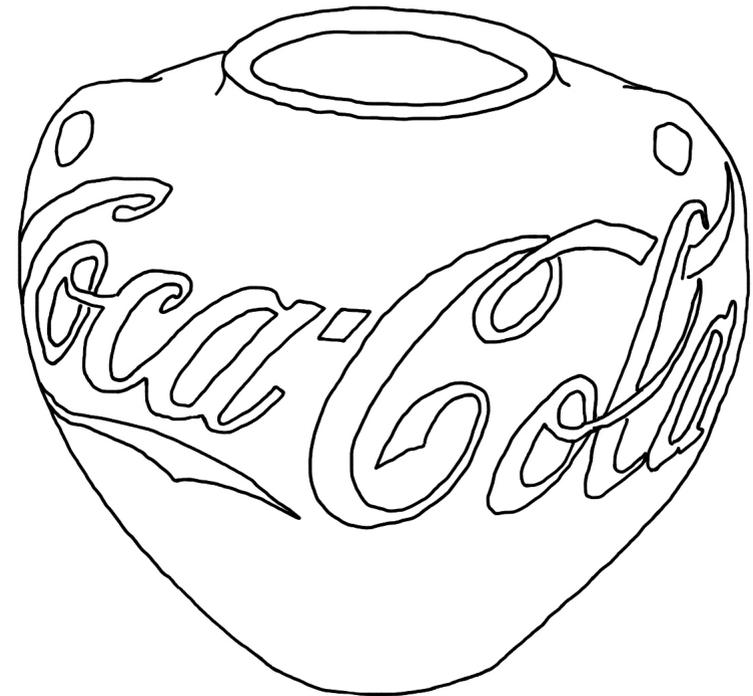
Art that is Art (and not just what someone says it is...) should serve as a reference for the future. It should have the ability to be an example in a conversation, or in a private thought. Art should be remembered, though not by all people; be remembered in different ways, by various people. For some people, an artwork is reassuring, for others, the same artwork is disturbing... and this is how artworks and people can share an emotion. It is one part of the experience.



Richard Serra, "Tilted Arc"(Foley Federal Plaza, Manhattan, between 1981 and 1989).

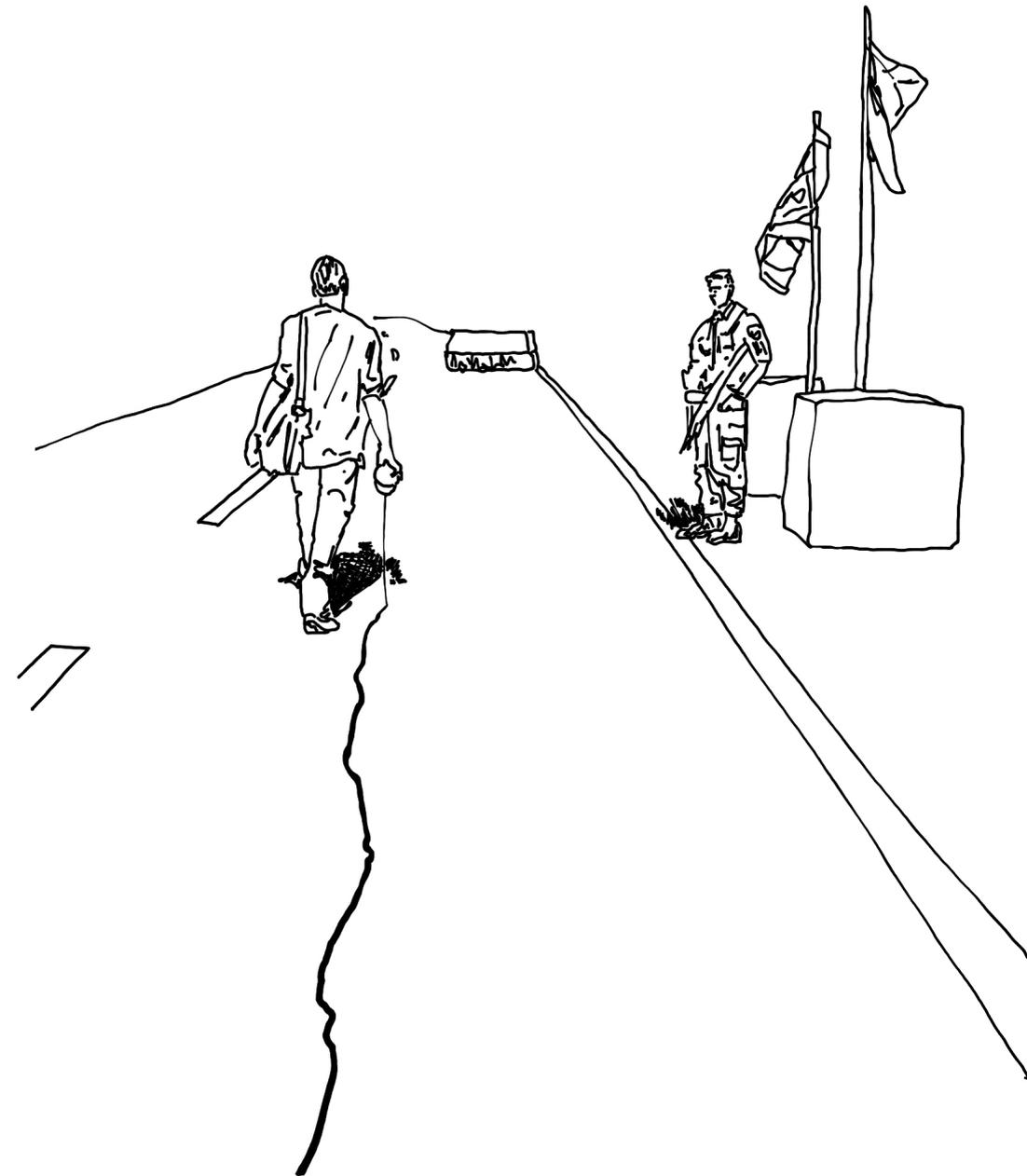
POINT 4

Works or creations that are considered Art are not beautiful or ugly, just by themselves. Artworks are what each person thinks of them, and that does not change the fact of original intention in the works and creations, or what is remarkable and of what we remember, in the future and for some time afterwards... some for much longer...



POINT 5

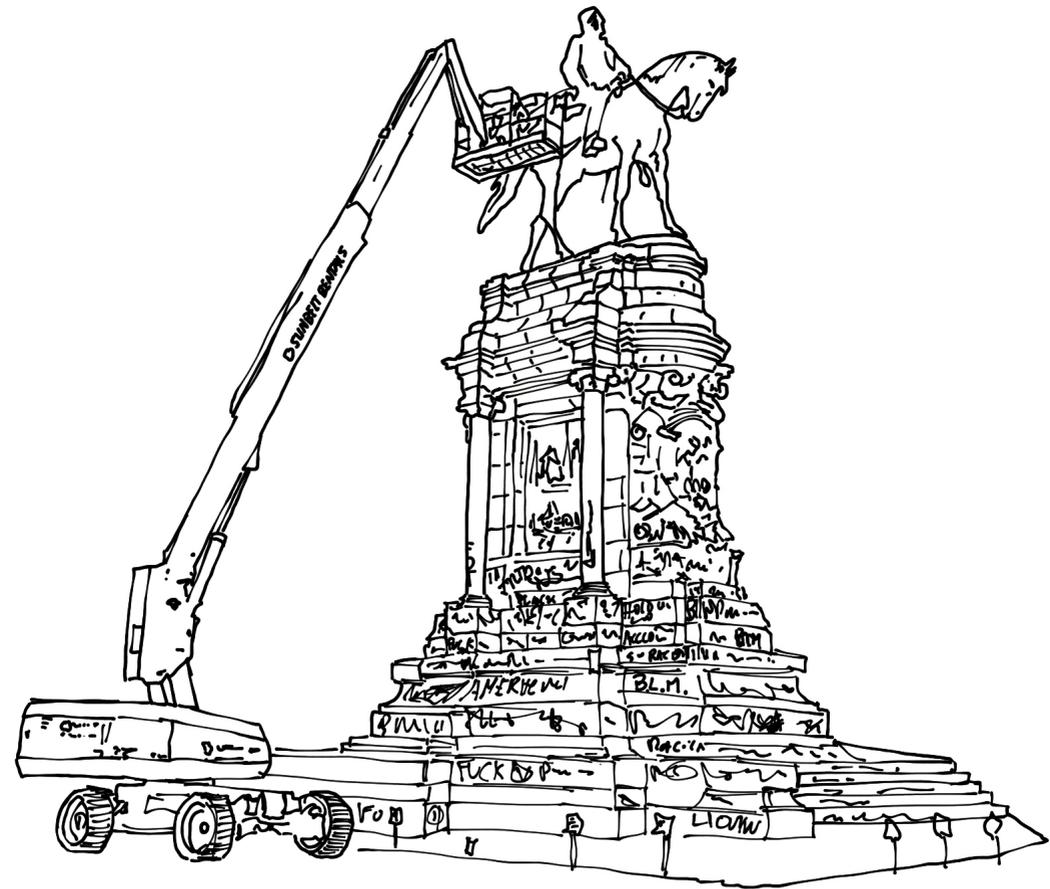
Finally, for Art to be what it should be, it cannot be known to only those who created it. Otherwise, everything and nothing would be Art. Art has to be seen and felt by others, and among these others—no matter how many, as Art is not defined by quantity—they should think about what they saw or heard or touched or felt, and from this experience they are different/changed from the moment before. A work or artistic creation never lives alone with whom imagined and created it.



Art, therefore, is only Art when seen, heard, touched...felt. By who creates it and others beyond the creator.

Even if sometimes the works of Art get lost, or disappear—artistic creations, from time to time, disappear. On purpose or unintentionally.

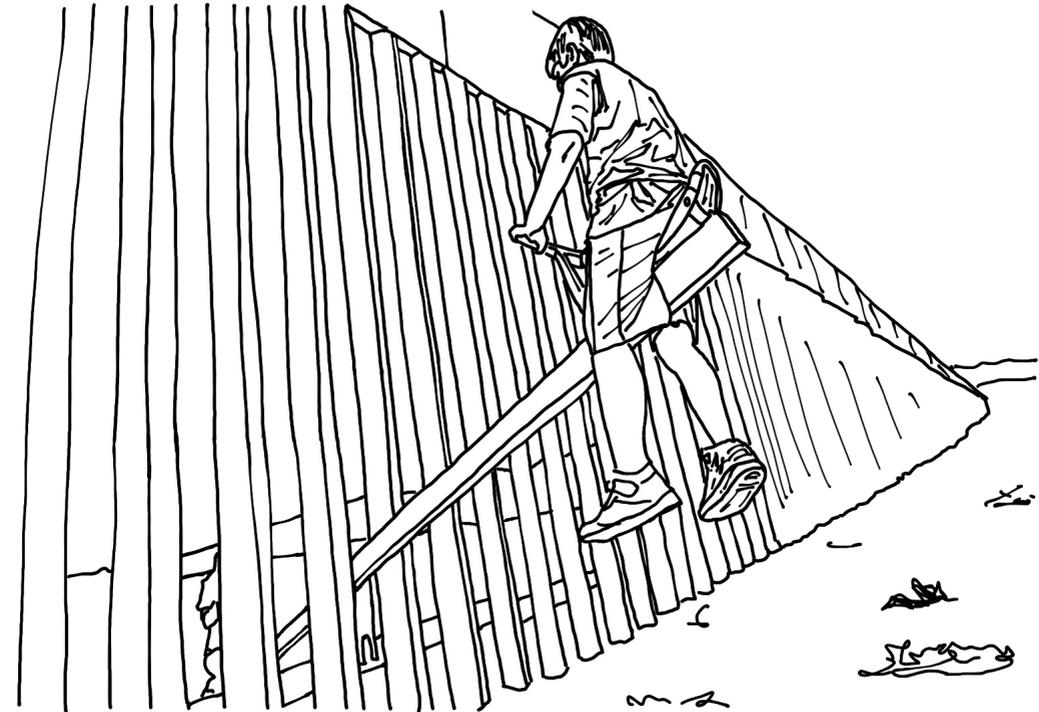
The day a creation has been understood as Art, there is no turning back. It is forever a work of Art, even if it disappears (until someone finds it... if someday it is found).



Maintenance work on the “Robert E. Lee” equestrian statue of Antonin Mercié (U.S.A. - Richmond, Virginia), in 2020, after graffiti carried out during the Black Lives Matter protests.

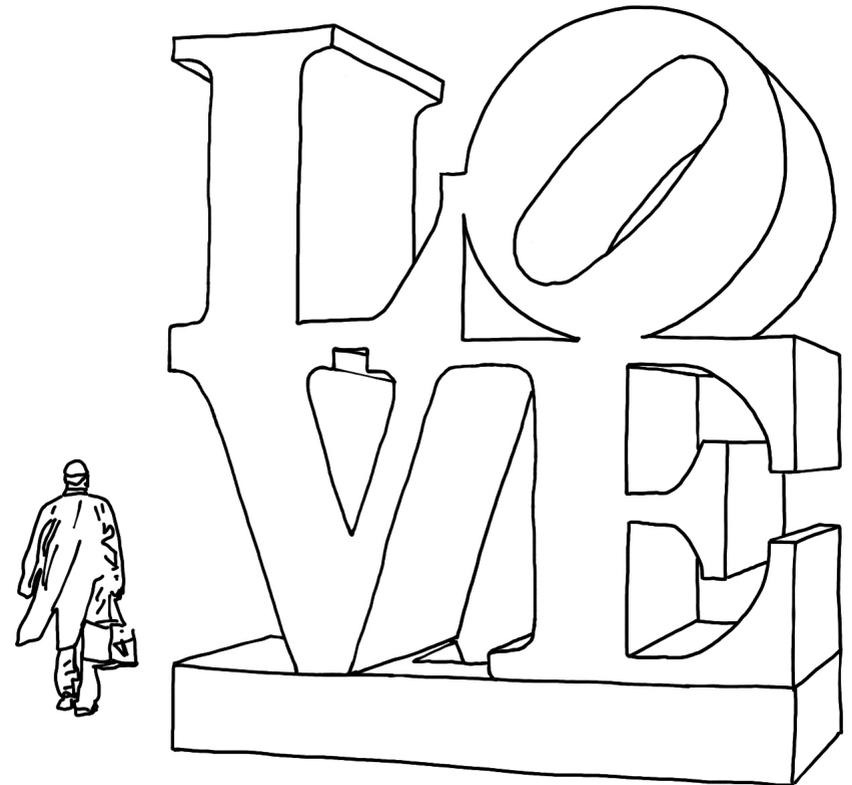
Well... this is one way to understand or define the word Art, a definition we acknowledged earlier would be challenging to present. There are still other ways, with other perspectives and other phrases. Other visions.

There are many types of Art, and that makes conversation even more difficult. One of these types (it is called typology) of Art is called Public Art or Art in the Public Space. Of this type or typology, it is more or less easy to affirm that it is Art that is placed or is presented in a public space. The question remains as to what is public. What will be public if not the opposite of what is private? And what is public if all that is Art must be seen or felt by one other than the creator? Should not all Art be public?



There are many questions...and all can be responded with “yes.” But...the public places are those that, in principle, are available to all or a vast majority of people who want to experience them, even with conditions of having to buy a ticket. It is also said with a more serious word: access. Public Art is widely accessible and often designed for a larger scale than normal (which is the same as saying a large size). It is not always like that, but almost...

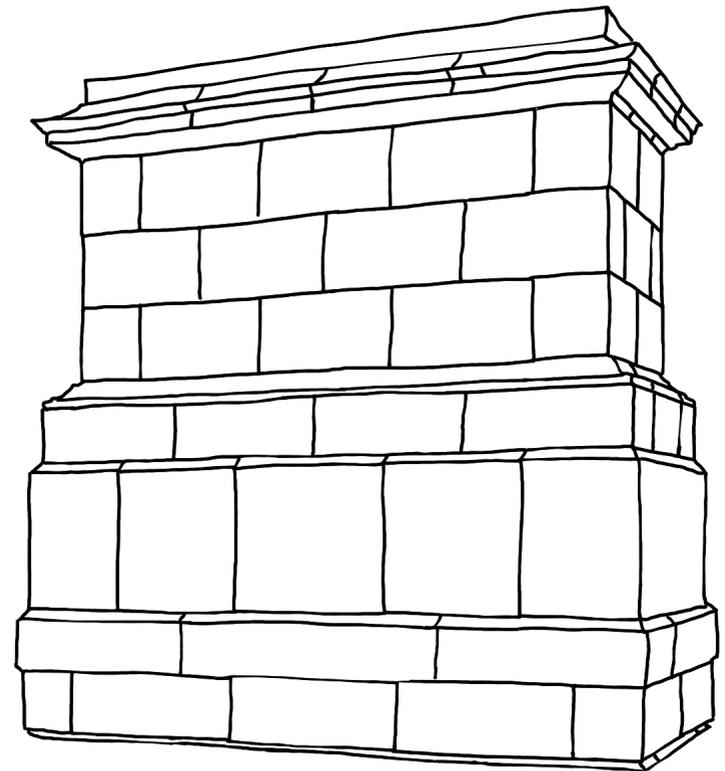
A work of Art in a garden of someone who never invites others to enter...it is Art outdoors, outdoors...it is not Public Art with capitals!



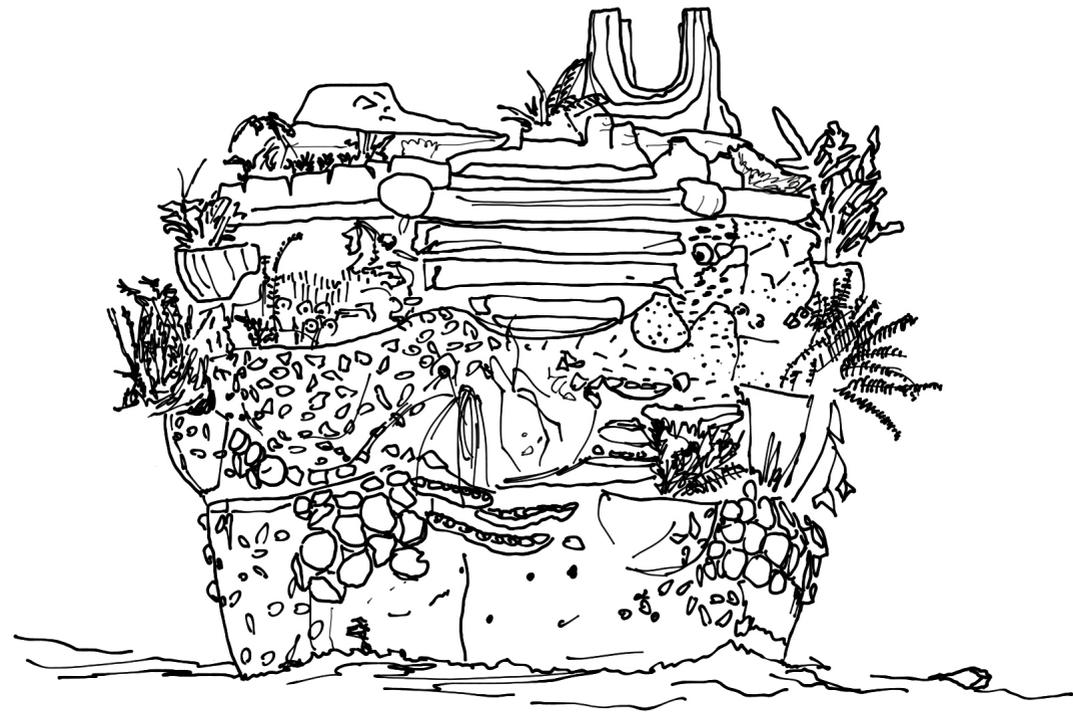
On the other hand, Public Art—beyond the local where it is placed and the scale it has—is presumed to have, or to think about having, a collective message. It is more or less Art made for “conversation” between many people at the same time, instead of “talking” to one person at a time.

Were it every artistic creation could be destined for a private conversation, it would then be the case for Public Art to be made for a crowd or a collective...there are some that would say it is made for a community (which is a group of people who belong to the same place and have the same tastes and habits and history).

For this reason and easily said, a statue in a city square is Public Art, even if not everyone likes it, or sees themselves in it.



Also...in a public park, open and accessible to all who wish to visit, the works of Art placed there are Public Art, when and with conveying a message to everyone (“talking” to those who visit them). Be it statues of historical characters or reflections on a world that is large and vast. And a world that has many voices that are worth being heard...



Liliana Velho, “Pedra Viva” for Poldra, in Viseu, Portugal (2019).

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

The illustrations in this publication were made by the artist Pedro Pires, from a selection of photographs of works and/or elements of Art in the Public Space, and portraits/records of contemporary artists. Presented below are the sources—and respective links—that served as inspiration for these illustrations.

Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd,
“Non Violence” or “The Knotted Gun” (1984).
Photo: Getty Images/ullstein bild, www.bit.ly/3uyUQyN

Damien Hirst in his studio, with a painting
from the “Cherry Blossoms” series.
www.bit.ly/3rzW3pT

Erwin Wurm, “Astronomical Purpose”,
One Minute Sculptures series (2014/19).
Photo by Owen Wong, www.cnn.it/3sqwJSn

Pedro Cabrita Reis in the Rua do Açúcar studio.
Photo by Nuno Moreira Inácio, www.bit.ly/3B6Ppuk

Terminal Bandeira building in São Paulo, Brazil, (2017).
www.bit.ly/3FmeC5Q

Richard Serra, “Tilted Arc”, (1981).
Photo by David Aschkenas © 1985, www.bit.ly/3Bbf6t6

Ai Weiwei, “Han Dynasty urn with Coca-Cola logo”(1993).
© Ai Weiwei Studio. Courtesy Lisson Gallery,
www.bit.ly/2Yb3uY6Courtesy Lisson Gallery

Francys Alys, [frame from] “The Green Line” (2004).
Photo © Francis Alys, www.bit.ly/3DOnSue

Antonin Mercié, equestrian statue of “Robert E. Lee,” (1890).
Photo by Steve Helber (shutterstock), www.bit.ly/3mhMGXR

Ronald Rael & Virginia San Fratello, “Teeter-Totter” (July 28, 2019).
Photo by Christian Chavez/AP, www.abcn.ws/3A3weiQ

Robert Indiana, “LOVE” (September 2006).
Photo by Hu Totya, www.bit.ly/3D9wOOi

Charles Barry, “Fourth Plynth” (1841).
Cover of the book on 4th Plynth, www.bit.ly/2YcjHwT

Liliana Velho, “Living Stone” (2019).
Photo by Luís Belo, www.bit.ly/3FeVxSM



POLDRA - Public Sculpture Project is an initiative of Public Art, founded in Viseu, Portugal, in the year 2018.

Among its achievements is the creation of a Public Art Route in the Mata do Fontelo (city park of Viseu), the International Open Call POLDRA (which between 2019 and 2021 received around 400 applications from 50 continents and almost 50 distinct countries), and the Junior Curator Program, aimed at introducing the theme of contemporary creation in/for Public Space within public schools.

POLDRA also developed the program POLDRA – Van Size Public Art, implementing the idea of circulation of Public Art as an essential premise for debate on the subject. The Public Space belongs to all elements of a community, thus why Art in the Public Space will initiate dialogues, even if not always consensual...

This publication, an extension of the Junior Curator Program of POLDRA, is an addition to the conversation with multiple views and contributions.

The POLDRA Junior Curator program aims to encourage knowledge of the relative dimensions of contemporary creation in public space, from the context of creation to the deployment of the works, as well as the meanings of the works and intentions of their respective authors, putting into debate concepts such as art, contemporary creation, space, scale, aesthetics, and public intervention.

The designation “Junior Curator” simultaneously refers to the notion of age of the participants (ideally considered for a range of ages) and the notion of experience. “Junior” because “new” in the analysis of the presented reality. On the other hand, “Curator” refers doubly for the artistic curatorship, the exhibition, yet equally for the responsibility of preservation and action oriented towards respect for any “good” the public space requires, and that admits every member of the community.

POLDRA - VAN SIZE PUBLIC ART

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