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公共艺术

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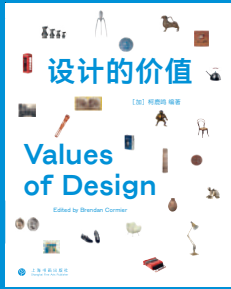
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《设计的价值》 探讨了我们应如何衡量事物的价值， 以及反过来价值又是怎样塑造  我们的设计方式的。1857年，当维多利亚与艾伯特博物馆  作为世界第一家设计博物馆对外开放时， 其宗旨是要通过颂扬良好设计的固有价值来改进我们的制作工艺。

但价值究竟是什么呢  ？价值反映的是性能  还是惊奇？ 是解决问题  还是成本  ？人们  的价值观是会变的。随着时间的推移  ，我们对设计的评判标准也是会变的。这本书正是要邀请您去思考您所看重的东西，以及您的价值观  对我们所生活的世界  会产生什么影响。

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设计的价值
Values of Design

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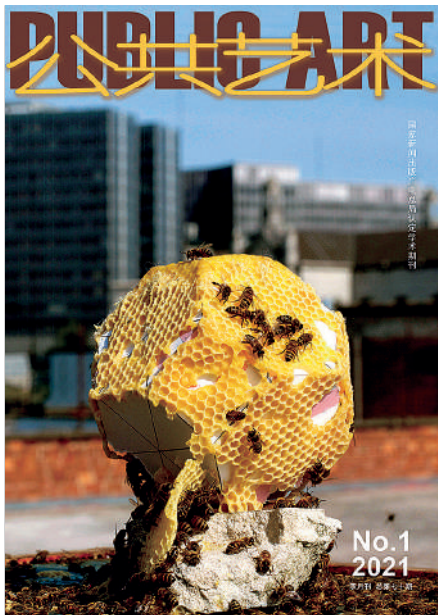


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封面：安妮马瑞·麦斯，声音蜂房实验项目，2013—2015，图片来自 Annemarie Maes

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编者语

生态危机是人类最大的危机。在新冠病毒仍然在全球肆虐的当下，我们再一次聚焦生态艺术。虽然对于环境问题的认知已经发生了很大的改变，但在新困境来临时，我们不得不反思：在不确定的未来，公共艺术何为？生态艺术提供了一个很好的视角。

生态艺术有哪些新的发展动向？将对社会产生哪些积极影响？本期内容围绕生态环境的政策、生态艺术的评价、动物研究视角下生态艺术的发展、艺术与科技的跨领域合作，以及生态艺术作为社会公民主动参与、多元共治的一种公共艺术形式等诸多方面，展开了对生态艺术这一话题全新的讨论。

生态艺术的重要作用就是要通过艺术家的创造力来引发人们对于环境问题的关注，从而提升人们的环境保护意识。此外，生态艺术的发展也离不开政府政策的支持、社会企业以及每一个公民的奉献。本期中，学者们阐述了当下生态艺术发展中面临的问题，介绍了国内外的前沿理论与具有示范意义的优秀案例，分享了生态艺术领域的全新动向，包括国家环境政策、社会和艺术领域的公共教育如何影响生态艺术的发展，以期呈现艺术家、科学家、环境学家、生物学家如何通过共同合作，以一种跨学科的方式来展现艺术在解决环境治理、生态多样性修复等生态问题时所起到的积极作用。通过国内外最新案例的分析和引介，我们也可以了解生态艺术的最新发展趋势及其“产生真正改变”的潜能。

钟超凯

公共艺术的收藏、教育与实践： 芝加哥大学克莉丝汀·梅林教授访谈

潘力 / 采访
芝加哥大学斯马特美术馆 / 图



克莉丝汀·梅林近照

克莉丝汀·梅林(Christine Mehring)是芝加哥大学玛丽·L·布洛克艺术史教授，斯马特艺术博物馆兼职策展人。她于2013-16年和2017-20年担任艺术史系主任。她的研究、写作和教学重点是抽象艺术，尤其是非模仿形式和非传统材料在历史背景下的表现方式，以及艺术和设计之间的交叉，包括室内和家具设计、壁画和公共艺术。从2010年到2013年，她担任大学校园规划咨询委员会的成员，后来担任主席。从那以后，她帮助成立了芝加哥大学的公共艺术委员会并担任委员，并领导了几个大型项目，研究、记录、保护和管理芝加哥大学的公共艺术。本刊特邀上海大学上海美术学院潘力教授对梅林教授进行专访，就公共艺术收藏、公共艺术与城市关系、校园公共艺术与芝加哥大学的教育理念和教育实践之间的关系、公共艺术的意义等问题展开讨论。

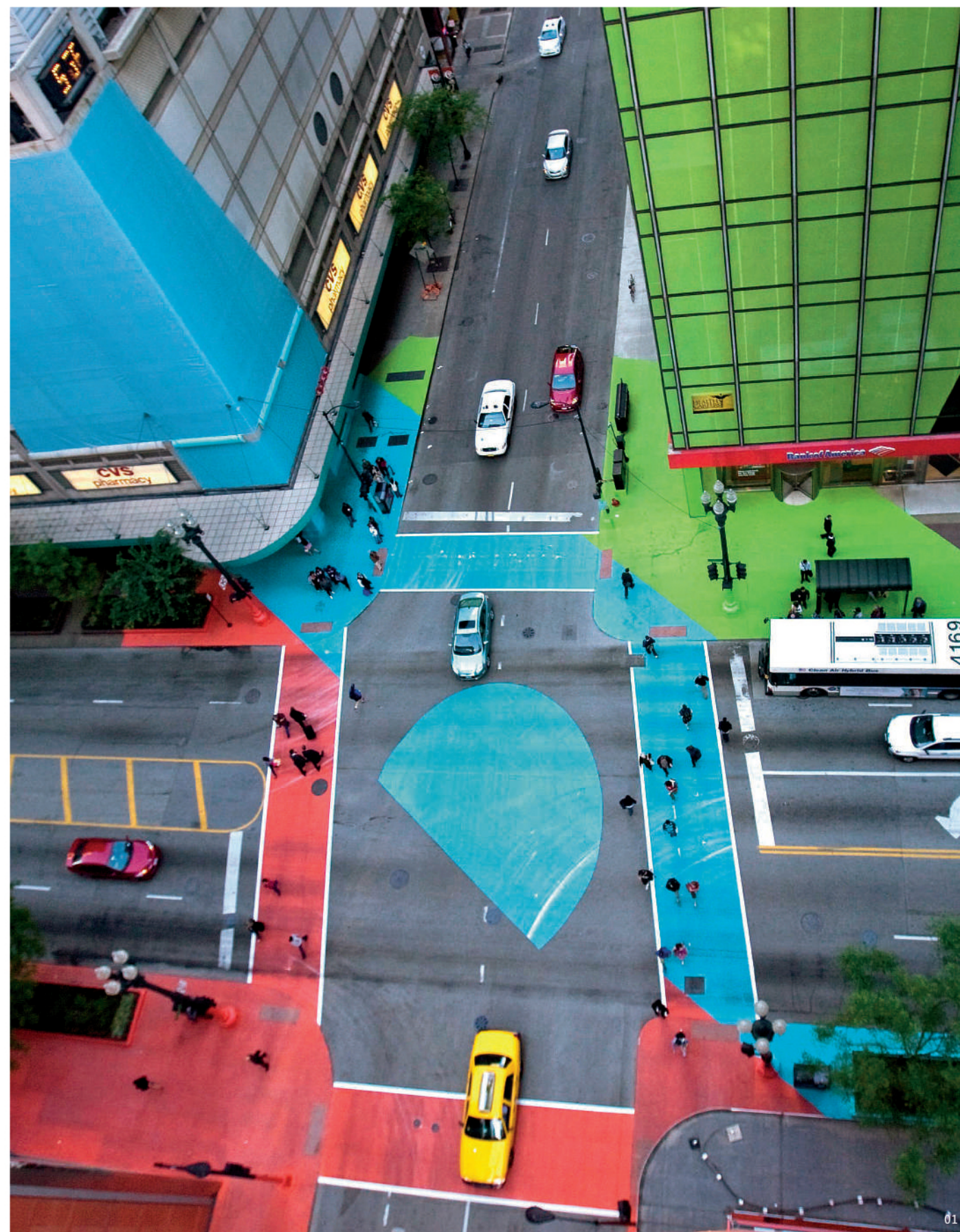
潘力：首先能跟我们分享一下芝加哥举世闻名的公共艺术藏品吗？

克莉丝汀·梅林：我在德国长大，出于对北美艺术的热情，二十岁出头来到美国。但我惊讶地发现，与欧洲那种富有实验性、挑战性、前沿性的公共艺术作品和项目相比，这个国家的公共艺术显得过于保守。我对公共艺术的理解成型于各种展览，如1977年由卡斯珀·科尼格(Kasper König)创立、而后十年一届极具变革性的明斯特雕塑展(Skulptur Projekte Münster)、扬·霍特(Jan Hoet)的庞顿主题展(Ponton Temse)以及第九届卡塞尔文献展等。所有这些展览都把整座城市当作艺术实践的对象，点燃了我对公共艺术的热情。这些艺术你可能会偶然发现，甚至

难以注意，因为公共艺术不是为宏伟的广场或华丽的建筑设计的，而是在停车场、公共厕所和死胡同的楼梯里，不是出现在纪念英雄或热门人物和事件的雕塑中，而是有如一英尺(约零点三米)高的“蛋糕”或一对“樱桃”等异想天开的玩意，它们或取材于现代城市环境，比如混凝土或水，或为之服务，比如景观或花卉、广告牌和公共汽车等，任何你能想到的事物都可以物尽其用。

来到芝加哥，我发现了另一种悠久、丰富的公共艺术史，也许总体上更保守一些。它始于1905年，慈善家兼木材商人本杰明·弗格森(Benjamin Ferguson)用他的个人资产在芝加哥市设立了一个由艺术学院管理的信托基金，致力于“建立和维护不朽的雕像和纪念碑”。无论彼时还

01. 杰西卡(股权人)，色彩拥堵，特定现场装置，2012，美国芝加哥。





02



03



04



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06

是此刻，这都是一份超凡脱俗、独具慧眼的礼物！即使是现在，也很少有城市拥有公共艺术禀赋，更不用说一个世纪以前！这在一定程度上要归功于芝加哥建筑师丹尼尔·伯纳姆（Daniel Burnham）的倡导。他1909年的“伯纳姆计划”（Burnham Plan）建立了我们宝贵的湖滨公园，并为城市公共空间创建了合理规划。因此，从很早开始，芝加哥不仅对公共艺术进行了投资，而且对城市的市政功能和象征意义也有了了解。

换句话说，芝加哥的公共艺术所呈现的正是几个不同且重要的时期和模式叠加与共存的结果：既有历史遗迹和浮雕（可追溯到重建城市的最初几十年，通常委托建筑施工），又有企业资本背景的标志性的20世纪中叶现代和国际主义风格建筑，如理查德·利波尔德（Richard Lippold）在索姆的内陆钢铁大厅，或是阿莫科公司（Amoco Corporation）赞助的哈里·贝尔托亚（Harry Bertioia）；既有侧重公众体验的作品，例如被昵称为“毕加索”（the Picasso）或“豆子”（the Bean）的雕塑作品《云门》，以及最近克里·詹姆斯·马歇尔（Kerry James Marshall）令人惊叹的

壁画《拉什莫尔》（*Rushmore*），也有当地艺术家创作的永久性或临时性的装置艺术，例如20世纪70年代的理查德·亨特或露丝·达克沃思，或近期的托尼·塔塞特和杰西卡·斯托克的作品。尤其是斯托克的作品《色彩拥堵》（*Color Jam*），因其强烈的城市参与性而备受青睐；此外还有以社区为目标的嵌入型艺术作品，尤以壁画见多，以及来自非营利机构的全方位支持。虽然在几十年间断断续续，但仍为我们带来了州长州立大学宽敞的雕塑公园，以及我们芝加哥大学亨利·摩尔1966年的雕塑《核能》。该作品建于国家历史地标性遗址之上，以纪念物理学家恩里科·费米领导的第一次人造自持核裂变。

潘力：芝加哥大学的公共艺术活动是如何融入芝加哥这座城市的公共艺术语境的？

克莉丝汀·梅林：两者有许多交集，其中几个模式在我们校园里得到了很好的体现。我想到四个例子。亨利·摩尔的雕塑《核能》是由该市的弗格森基金从艺术家手中直接购买的，虽然大学在“纪念费米实验二十五周年”之际发起了这项委托，并设置了这件作品，但实际上它属于芝加哥市民。公共艺术就其本身的性质而言，往往

02. 珍妮·霍尔泽，你是我的盟友，LED装置，卡车，文本：Sappho, fragment 1 from If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho，作者：Anne Carson，2020，摄影：克里斯托弗·迪尔茨
03. 珍妮·霍尔泽，你是我的盟友，LED装置，卡车，文本：Borderlands / La Frontera，作者：Gloria Anzaldúa，2020，摄影：克里斯托弗·迪尔茨
04. 珍妮·霍尔泽，你是我的盟友，增强现实App，文本：Stesichoros，作者：Plato，2020，摄影：克里斯托弗·迪尔茨
- 05-06. 珍妮·霍尔泽，你是我的盟友，增强现实App，文本：A Vindication of the Rights of Woman，作者：Mary Wollstonecraft，2020，摄影：克里斯托弗·迪尔茨

需要多个机构和人员共同努力，这对参与其中的人，以及确保艺术作品的质量来说是一个挑战。因为不幸的是，基于共识的艺术往往最终会成为糟糕的艺术。但是我们大学的公民参与办公室和当地社区成员合作，帮助保护芝加哥南区众多壁画的方式令我感到骄傲。

还有两个是我见过的最美丽的20世纪中叶的艺术和建筑的集合体，就在距离我办公室不远的地方。一个是芝加哥艺术家露丝·达克沃思（Ruth Duckworth）为I. W. 科尔伯恩的地球物理科学大楼设计的私密但极富张力的陶瓷门厅：它不想让你匆匆穿过，而是想让你驻足，我每次走过都会感到遗憾；另一个是俄罗斯结构主义者安托万·佩夫斯纳（Antoine Pevsner）的青铜雕塑《空间建筑与第三、第四维度》，是在建筑师的要求下为埃罗·萨里宁（Eero Saarinen）的法学院四合院设计的。

在今天这个时代，要想成功是不容易的。建筑师可能是控制狂，但他们也是大规模创造和塑造空间、材料的专家。在20世纪中叶，美国各地尤其是芝加哥市，政府和大学等机构尊重甚至顺从于同时代的建筑和建筑师，他们拥抱建筑师的乌托邦式信仰，在公共建筑和空间中使用新的可能形式和材料，反映和建设先进的民主社会。你可以看到这些历史悠久的建筑群仍然在许多大学校园里，甚至在华盛顿特区的政府大楼里蓬勃昂扬。至于佩夫斯纳和萨里宁的组合，我喜欢不同比例的脊状纹理的对话，以及雕塑的双曲线反映建筑群的遮蔽和流动。它有一种超凡脱俗的感觉，是我们校园里最美丽的空间之一。我在法学院的同事是幸运的。

潘力：你能否具体谈谈校园公共艺术与芝加哥大学这样的世界知名大学的教育理念和教育实践之间的关系？

克莉丝汀·梅林：这个问题问得很好！正是基于我们大学的使命和承诺，要对知识的生产、挑战以及严谨的探究保持热情，让我首先倡导展示我们校园里的公共艺术。大约八年前，我们所拥有的还只是一个PDF目录，列出了我们“校园艺术”的一小部分。今天，我们已经有了一个公共艺

术网站（<https://arts.uchicago.edu/public-art>）。我与两个研讨小组合作，以学生研究和写作的文本为网站特色。我很幸运地与大学领导共事，特别是丹尼尔·迪尔迈尔（前教务长）、大卫·菲希安（前执行副校长）、比尔·布朗（前艺术教务长高级顾问）和比尔·米歇尔（他身兼数职，并负责管理洛根艺术中心）。他们看到了潜力，即使当时还不明显。

公共艺术在智力和感官方面提出挑战，带来困惑，以激发你的好奇心，提高你对周围环境的空间、物质、历史的意识，它还教我们回到某个事物，以不同的方式看待它，从而发现新的方面和视角。事实上，公共艺术将大学的知识生活延伸到教室、图书馆和实验室之外，延伸到我们的日常生活中。公共艺术也创造和塑造了社区。在我们的校园里，在我们的大学和周围的社区之间，公共艺术把我们与前人，与我们今天共享空间的人联系在一起。沿着这些思路，公共艺术也塑造了记忆，尤其是在许多学生的价值观的成型期。

我对埃尔斯沃思·凯利（Ellsworth Kelly）的雕塑有着深刻的记忆，这座雕塑坐落于我在哈佛大学读研究生时居住的路易斯·塞特公寓楼。我在芝加哥大学从事的所有公共艺术工作都源于我的信念，即它是一种典型的芝加哥大学的艺术形式，提倡“探究和影响”，引用我们校长的座右铭：它挑战我们去观察和思考，任何人都可以接触到它，即使是在新冠疫情期间！我每周都会看到我们最新添置的公共艺术收藏——理查德·塞拉（Richard Serra）的《西雅图直角支撑》（*Seattle Right Angles Propped*）。这件雕塑就安装在我们美术馆和艺术史系的庭院中央，在美术馆关闭近一年的时间里，满足了我对艺术的需求。

潘力：今天的艺术世界，观念艺术和参与性艺术盛行，公共艺术面临的最大挑战是如何在不断变化的人文环境中，超越制度实体的局限，与人保持一种关系和对话。您如何理解作为实体的公共艺术和作为事件的公共艺术？

克莉丝汀·梅林：说到可接近性，我不认



07. 保护专家在沃尔夫·弗斯特的《混凝土交通》下方工作，2016，美国芝加哥。摄影：斯蒂芬·墨菲
08. 沃尔夫·弗斯特，混凝土交通，1970，混凝土，1957年凯迪拉克62系列德维尔轿车，宽:173.99厘米，长:25.4厘米，重:16.2吨，摄影：迈克尔·特鲁皮亚
09. “弗斯特：混凝土，1969—1973”展，芝加哥大学Smart美术馆，2016，前景：弗斯特的混凝土椅子，1971，摄影：迈克尔·特鲁皮亚

为公共艺术作为对象或事件有多大区别。因此，首先要谈的是超越制度限制，接触广泛受众的问题：这才是所有公共艺术的真正意义所在。公共艺术是一种富有挑战性和令人兴奋的艺术形式，它汇集了不同的利益相关者和观点。它让公众、艺术专家，如策展人和艺术史学家、建筑师和城市设计师、市政府的各个部门或任何类型的机构，去了解艺术可以是什么，可以做什么，从而去测试或者定义其作为一个社区的过去、现在和未来。在大学里，我在公共艺术方面的工作一直涉及大量不同的受众和单位，包括职工、教师、学生和领导，建筑师、园林设计师和设施单位，律师、市民和国际访客，对外沟通和校友关系，以及许多其他高度专业化的领域，例如我们的停车办公室、登记或IT服务。

回到刚才所说的“糟糕的共识艺术”，

需要记住两个重点。第一，我们必须为艺术专家提供空间。作为一个研究非传统材料的艺术历史学家，我认为自己或许能够回答如何处理仓库里的“混凝土汽车”。我喜欢这个挑战，去解释为什么把一辆1957年的凯迪拉克浇铸在混凝土中是艺术，如果我不能解释清楚，我就不应该教艺术史。第二，每件作品都只能是一件作品、一个视角、一个瞬间。随着时间的推移，公共艺术，像建筑一样开始分层，呈现出令人激动的城市历史、环境、社区和身份的多样性。让公共艺术真正具有“公共性”，也就是让它与当下和未来的许多人息息相关，这不仅是艺术家和公共艺术的委托者的任务，也是观众的任务，观众必须允许自己接受挑战。对我来说，看似最无聊、最无关紧要的公共艺术作品恰恰是我期待看到的。

现在，再回到你关于公共艺术作为实体与事件的问题。我承认作为一个艺术史学家和策展人，我对物品有偏见，它们吸引了我对材料和所有视觉的东西（色彩、比例、纹理）的热情。但我也对新媒体在公共艺术方面的潜力非常感兴趣，比如刚刚完成的、我们委托珍妮·霍尔泽(Jenny Holzer)制作的AR应用程序，她为我们校园里的一些建筑瑰宝制作了美丽的动画。公共艺术的一大优点是，在大多数情况下，你可以安全地触摸和观看它，与它互动，而且当你居住或工作在附近时，你可以经常这样做。这是一种非常特殊的体验艺术的方式，让它与你一起成长。令人兴奋的是，在过去几十年里出现了更多的参与式公共艺术形式，包括基于事件的艺术和行为艺术，至少可以追溯到约瑟夫·博伊斯的“社会雕塑”愿景和他的许多户外表演。最近所谓的关系美学或公共实践艺术就极大地受惠于他的遗产。

我想说的是，我的同事西斯特·盖茨(Theaster Gates)的触手艺术(Tentacular art)是我们大学最重要的公共艺术发展之一，因为它已经延伸到很多不同的领域。感谢我们的校友丹·彼得曼(Dan Peterman)的实践，特别是他独创的实验

站。西斯特的灵感来自他多年前在大学艺术运营的工作经验。我希望有一天有人会详细研究和记录他之前的工作历程。从那时起，这已成为一项开创性的艺术实践，以他早期的生活和工作空间的形式在南区开展了“多尔切斯特项目”(Dorchester Projects)。西斯特还与大学合作创办了他的重建基金会，以及艺术和公共生活倡议活动，包括许多建筑保护与改造、历史和物质文化收藏、公共服务、文化活动、青年学徒制——凡是你能想到的都有。我想我最喜欢西斯特作品的地方在于，它跨越了公共艺术作为实体、事件和保存之间的鸿沟。在某种程度上，他的工作是将面临消失的历史物品拯救到未来。我和肖恩·凯勒(Sean Keller)在一篇关于他作品的文章中称之为“重建未来”(Reconstruction the future)。同样，作为公共艺术的历史学家和策展人，检验历史公共艺术与现在及未来的相关性是我热爱并肩负责任的工作之一，而“事件”无疑是检验的一种方式。这也是为什么我要保护沃尔夫·弗斯特(Wolf Vostell)的巨大公共雕塑《混凝土交通》(Concrete Traffic)，并策划了为期一年的项目来庆祝它的回归。

潜力：“他对混凝土的实验是一种真正的

令人震惊的探索，这种材料的潜在意义，像其他个别艺术家一样，定义了20世纪的形态——它的日常城市体验。《混凝土交通》最近的重新发现，强调了我们仍然需要学习关于新先锋派跨越完全不同的地点，甚至整个世界的转变和换位的策略。”我对您在《艺术论坛》杂志上发表的关于《混凝土交通》的文章中的这段话非常感兴趣。可以说，这段话不仅总结了弗斯特的艺术在过去和未来的意义，而且也与当代艺术的发展趋势息息相关。您能详细谈一谈吗？换句话说，您能否从您的角度来谈谈《混凝土交通》的含义，以及它与沃尔夫·弗斯特的艺术之间的关系？

克莉丝汀·梅林：《混凝土交通》是由混凝土建成的，这无疑是最有趣和最具挑战性的方面。我们的许多保护工作和项目规划都集中在材料上。我的艺术史研究兴趣之一是非传统材料——塑料或其他20世纪诞生的标志性材料——或者其他日常生活中明显的非艺术材料，像动物（如罗伯特·劳森伯格、达米恩·赫斯特）、巧克力（迪特尔·罗斯、保罗·麦卡锡）、脂肪和印花面料(分别是约瑟夫·博伊斯和西格玛·波尔克的标志材料)等，还能列举很多。关于马塞尔·杜尚(Marcel Duchamp)





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10-11. 露丝·达克沃思，1969，地球、天空和水，陶瓷门厅，摄影：潘力



11

发明“现成品”的主要争论是，它质疑了原创性和独特性的价值，并引起了对艺术的制度定义和价值的关注，而最终的结论中最关键的是，这些物品都不过是工业上的现成品，如此而已。然而，所有这些20世纪的艺术家都将材料用于表达他们独特的意义和共鸣，例如，这些材料给他们的艺术创作带来了历史特有的、并非总是单一的意义；或他们试图诠释这些材料在不同时间点、不同语境中的不同含义。

所以，弗斯特使用混凝土是因为它的强度，甚至可以说是带有侵略性和破坏性的特质，同时也是因为它不易损坏，可以作为一种为将来保护和保存战后工业物品的方式。他用它来吸引人们对日益增加的国际化 and 世界城市化中同质性的关注，但也探索了更多的文化特定意义，比如混凝土与德国分裂和柏林墙。在这里，混凝土远非“前卫”的现成材料，它也不仅仅是战前艺术家已经做过的“前卫”的重复。在弗斯特的手中，考虑到第二次世界大战的地堡和战后重建、冷战和以柏林墙为标志的铁幕统治，以及野兽派建筑 and 全球城市扩张，混凝土成为了一种非常“战后”的材料。我目前也正在研究这类课题，特别是在欧洲的20世纪五六十年代和70年代，“战后”人们的精神面貌、物资的匮乏 and 需求、生活重建 and 经济奇迹都赋予了材料不

同寻常的意义。最近，我最早的一些作品在展览“物之魅力：当代中国材质艺术”（The Allure of Matter: Material Art from China）中展出，策展人是我的同事巫鸿和我们大学斯马特美术馆的欧莉安娜·卡基奥内（Orianna Cacchione）。巫鸿第一次让我注意到战后欧洲艺术与20世纪90年代以来中国艺术的许多相似之处。

潘力：德国艺术家约瑟夫·博伊斯主张将当代艺术解读为“社会雕塑”，他对许多中国艺术家来说非常重要。作为一个德国出生的学者，你能谈谈这个概念是如何将当代艺术与公共艺术联系起来的吗？您如何看待当代艺术与公共艺术的关系？公共艺术可以说是当代艺术的一个方向和出路吗？

克莉丝汀·梅林：是的。自从战后非传统材料大爆发以来，艺术家在更多的当代艺术作品中（重新）使用了更多的材料类型。我们也应该考虑到这一点的潜在意义，尤其是在我们这个数字时代 and 现在这个新冠病毒大流行的时代，我们已经被剥夺了一切材料：触摸、纹理、比例，甚至温度、重量 and 坚固性。需要强调的是，这正是公共艺术的切入点：我们可以触摸它，为“视觉”艺术增加一个全新的感官维度。回到你前面的问题，关于公共艺术是对象还是活动：公共艺术“作为物体”，它

的物质性、可触性以及它与日常生活的联系，开放并迫使我们找到方法，通过规划的项目，或者新生代艺术家的创作，来激活有历史意义的公共艺术——把它带到当下，赋予其新的意义。我认为博伊斯就是这样做的，他对有意义的材料（尤其是脂肪、毛毡 and 蜡）和“社会雕塑”都有极大兴趣。“社会雕塑”这个词既指公共艺术，也指与公共相关的艺术。不过可惜的是，他能成功地将这些兴趣融合在一起的作品寥寥无几。

潘力：您和一大群校外专家、学生以及大学同事一起工作了很长时间，从事《混凝土交通》的保护 and 修复。现在它被放置在校园北部停车场的入口，据我所知，那里处于校园的边缘地带。能否谈谈这件作品在经过了一年的一系列高曝光度的艺术活动之后，如何在这样一个不显眼的位置上继续发挥艺术作用？

克莉丝汀·梅林：这是一个史诗般的项目，我们花了六年时间在不同的阶段与二十多名合作者一起工作，但它并没有结束：我的研究助理丽莎·查希尔（Lisa Zaher）和我仍在完成一本关于弗斯特和混凝土的书，许多关键合作者都有贡献，尤其是克里斯蒂安·谢德曼（Christian Scheidemann），一名文物保护专家，专门研究我感兴趣的非传统材料。

我们的确做了一个很棒的一年项目，包括三个展览、激浪派行为艺术、两次座谈会、一场雕塑穿越市区并返回校园的游行，等等。也要感谢大学领导的大力支持。你提出位置不显眼是对的，因为它被安置在一个长期停车场的入口处，而这一停车场的结构在大学里并不引人注目，汽车整天从那里进进出出，人们从车里出去上班，走到附近宿舍或斯马特美术馆。但这就是重点，对沃斯特尔和我来说，我们的任务是找到一个新场地。第一，符合艺术意图（我们的口号是“它必须在真正的汽车可能的地方”，因为它原本是位于当代艺术博物馆附近的一个停车场，由该博物馆于1970年委托建造）；第二，不让雕塑进一步遭受不必要的损耗（在芝加哥冬天的街道上，用铲雪机在老式汽车轮胎上撒盐是不可行的）；第三，这是一个让所

有大学利益相关者都能接受的位置（它显然不符合我们的新哥特式建筑的华丽景观）。

一旦我们清楚了所有它不可能出现的地方，克里斯蒂安和我很快就确定了停车场是最佳选择，我仍然相信，已故的弗斯特将非常高兴 and 自豪。大概一半的人开车或走路时不会注意到它，确实是不显眼的，甚至是隐形的。钢筋混凝土停车场环绕着混凝土雕塑——尽管混凝土的类型完全不同。弗斯特的作品极富20世纪中叶风格，而且是现场“手工制作”的，而停车场是由合成材料大规模浇筑的。但这正是目的的一部分：你很难注意到它，但当你注意到它时，它是强烈的、不和谐的、令人惊讶的、美丽的，也许对某些人来说是可怕的。这是一种我之前提到过的具有挑战性的艺术，它能让你停下来思考，关于混凝土、交通、停滞运动、老化、我们的城市环境等。

潘力：最近，您主持了珍妮·霍尔泽的校园公共艺术项目《你是我的盟友》。您能解释一下标题“你是我的盟友”和作品内容之间的关系吗？这个题目的主要思想是什么？

克莉丝汀·梅林：这是珍妮的选择，与她的许多其他标题一样，这句话来自她在这个作品中引用的二十九句话，萨福（Sappho）的诗句的最后一行，由诗人、古典主义者兼翻译家安妮·卡森（Anne Carson）翻译。在解释标题的重要性之前，让我先谈谈这些引语的来源，因为它触及了这一惊人的作品的核心。2019年夏天，珍妮获得了我校的罗森伯格（Rosenberger）杰出艺术成就奖章，她于1970—1972年在我们学院学习了两年。在那次访问中，我们的公共艺术策展人劳拉·斯图尔德（Laura Steward）和珍妮在校园里散步，并提出了创造一种新的公共艺术作品的想法。我们立马着手研究和探讨了几个适合她基于写作的艺术创作主题，并最终确定在芝加哥大学的核心课程中增加这样一门课，以教导我们的学生进行批判性思考，思考内容不限，但要能通过共享阅读 and 对“核心”文本，包括西方文明经典的讨论，形成多维度的思考，从而发展出更为全球化的视角。珍妮希望学生和教

师提交对他们有意义的文本，我们花了半年时间收集这些文本，因为有越来越多的人开始对珍妮在女性声音和多样性话语方面的关注感兴趣。其间，珍妮的大度与合作精神让我们印象深刻：筛选引言是一个长期反复的过程，艺术家、工作室和我们十名学生组成的大学团队不厌其烦地重复工作，才诞生了最终让人惊艳的成果。能与一位对我们的学生充满好奇的艺术家合作真是太棒了，她就如同我作为一名教师一样，致力于为下一代注入力量。

“你是我的盟友”这句特别的引语的意义，有如下几个方面。首先，它表明了我们的核心课程一直在自我改造：这是一位来自传统上被男性声音所主宰的古典时期的女诗人的呼喊，她呼吁其他人——包括读者——成为我们的盟友。其次，这也在发出合作的号召，就像珍妮和我们所做的，像我们的学生和教师所做的，像我们团队和大学的许多伙伴所做的，特别是学院院长约翰·博耶和克里斯托弗·怀尔德。当然，它也可以被理解为呼吁在美国分裂的政治和社会环境中寻找共同点。诚然，考虑到最近人们对“盟友关系”的理解，它还可以是对同理心的呼唤，为那些试图发出自己声音的人奔走呼告，为那些没有权力的人发声，为那些不能维护自身权益的人发声。对我来说，把珍妮的作品带进校园，也是为我刚刚开始保护的另一件校园艺术作品带来艺术史盟友的一种方式。这就是海伦·米拉的《比如决心》。艺术家以约翰·杜威和简·亚当斯在不同的大学建筑上用模板绘制的名言警句为素材，受弗兰克人文学院的委托，在伟大的吉姆·钱德勒的指导下开展创作。令人难以置信的是，创作的初衷仅仅是为了纪念一次会议。

至于标题和作品本身的关系，首先这件作品是一款基于互联网的移动增强现实应用，可以让你将这些引语虚拟投射到七栋大学建筑上（包括令人惊艳的萨里宁法学院），或是你周围的任何地方，无论是室内还是室外，包括你的家里。从这个层面上说，《你是我的盟友》还有很多其他意义。例如，它是一种与你投射到的特定环境或与物体对话的方式，让它成为你的一部分，成为你自我追求的伙伴，同时这

一环境或物体也会要求你，即App用户，成为它们的伙伴。总的来说，AR应用成为真实和虚幻之间的媒介：当你看到一段文字从你手机的摄像头投射到任何地方，却又不真正存在于任何地方时，会感到震惊。对我来说，它开启了与整个幻觉主义艺术史的对话，以及与我们这个充斥着社交媒体和“假新闻”时代的对话。所以，“你是我的盟友”也是对真理的呼唤，这对珍妮·霍尔泽的艺术来说一直很重要。我一直都很喜欢和仰慕她的作品，能和她一起工作是多么荣幸，更不用说为她的新作品贡献一份小小的力量了。

潘力：从《混凝土交通》到《你是我的盟友》，这两个校园公共艺术项目之间是否存在潜在的联系？它们如何反映您一贯的艺术主张？

克莉丝汀·梅林：每一个案例都是一个广泛的过程，以满足不同的大学利益相关者的需求、期望和潜力，并与自弗斯特项目以来设立的公共艺术委员会开展密切良好的合作。以霍尔泽为例，我们举行了一系列的会议，与大学教职员工和领导层的每个人讨论这个项目，收集反馈意见，并反映到作品的创作和塑造中。我认为，每一件艺术品，无论是用混凝土、凯迪拉克还是增强现实（AR）应用程序，都是在拓展公共艺术的边界，包括它的媒介与受众。每一件都用自己的方式，以意想不到的方法融入了我们的城市环境。因此，也许我从小耳濡目染的那种开拓性的公共艺术，也被它们一点一点地带到了美国。

潘力：《公共艺术》是中国唯一一本公共艺术期刊，由上海大学上海美术学院和上海书画出版社共同主办，在中国有广泛的影响力。公共艺术在当今中国的社会变革中也扮演着越来越重要的角色。就这个话题，您还有什么想对中国读者说的吗？

克莉丝汀·梅林：因为公共艺术是公共的，随着时间的推移而积累，它要求我们认真地审视自己，审视我们如何以批判和建设性的方式与我们共同的历史产生联系，并表达我们对社会的思考。这包括理解和评估哪些公共艺术作品以及我们历史的哪些部分需要被重新考虑、重构，甚至

移除。近年来，许多北美地区都在和历史遗留的种族主义势力进行角力，波及了不少历史遗迹，不管是美国南方还是北方的城市都有很多例子。比如去年，芝加哥市长决定暂时移除两个哥伦布雕像后不久，即宣布启动“种族愈合和历史清算项目”，成立一个委员会逐一审查芝加哥的纪念雕像，并要求“临时公共艺术作品需围绕新冠病毒、不平等和种族和解等更广泛的主题”。按照这一标准，有太多有争议且重要的艺术品需要考虑，例如，在芝加哥马凯特大楼大厅中央的表现印第安人的作品。我坚信，最好的前进方式必须建立在专家研究、与利益攸关方进行对话，以及严肃的辩论之上。

我还坚定地认为，我们必须避免妄下结论，拥抱多元共存、求同存异，甚至临时性的解决方案。对于这一系列复杂的问题，没有单一的解决方案。作为一名德国公民和研究20世纪德国艺术的艺术史学家，除了其他事情外，美国在对待历史和种族主义遗留问题中存在的严重的历史滞后，有时会令我感到困惑和震惊。年轻的时候，我曾对德国在“回顾过去”——如西奥多·阿多诺（Theodor Adorno）的名言——方面的匮乏或至少是迟缓非常不满，但是现在我意识到，二战后及柏林墙倒塌后，德国进行的一系列战后辩论其实值得借鉴，其显著成果包含对集中营（包括毁灭性装置，甚至受害者的头发）的历史保护，在许多德国城市建立国家和市政委员会大屠杀纪念馆（如柏林的彼得·艾森曼大屠杀纪念馆，还有许多不太知名的纪念馆，如汉堡的吉尔茨兄弟的反法西斯纪念碑等），以及1989年之后对东德纪念碑进行重建，无论是现场保护、拆除，都如施潘道城堡（Spandau Zitadelle）前德国公共纪念碑一样辉煌和具有高度的教育意义。对这些历史案例的共同兴趣，启发了我在芝加哥艺术学院同事兼公共艺术学者梅奇蒂尔德·威德里奇（Mechtild Widrich）和我一起在几年前组织了一系列研讨会，主题为“与纪念碑一同陨落？”，以历史的深度和全球视角来看待目前美国所面临的紧迫问题：不同的文化可以且必须相互学习。

Collection, Education and Practice of Public Art: Interview with Prof. Christine Mehring

Pan Li / Interview

Photos / Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago

Christine Mehring is Mary L. Block Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago and Adjunct Curator at the Smart Museum of Art. She chaired that department from 2013-16 and 2017-20. Her research, writing, and teaching focus on abstract art, especially the ways in which non-mimetic forms and non-traditional materials signify in relation to historical backgrounds, and on the cross-overs between art and design, including interior and furniture design, wall-paintings, and public art. From 2010 to 2013, she served as a member, then as chair, of the University’s Advisory Committee on Campus Planning. Since then, she helped found and served on the University’s Public Art Committee and led several large-scale projects researching, documenting, conserving, and commissioning public art at and for the University of Chicago. Professor Pan Li, Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, Shanghai University, was invited to interview Professor Mehring to discuss the public art collection, the relationship between public art and the city, the relationship between campus public art and the educational concept and practice of the University of Chicago, and also the significance of public art.

Pan Li: Tell us about Chicago's world-renowned public art collection.

Christine Mehring: Having grown up in Germany, and coming to the United States in my early twenties because of my passion for North American art, I was surprised to see how unadventurous this country’s public art appeared, compared to the kind of experimental, challenging, and advanced public art commissions and programs across European cities and institutions; my understanding of public art was shaped by exhibitions like Kasper König’s totally transformative Skulptur Projekte Münster, founded in 1977 and staged since every ten years, by Jan Hoet’s Ponton Temse exhibition and his documenta 9, all of which programmatically take over a city. They shaped my passion for public art you’d stumble across and might not even notice, for public art not conceived for grand plazas or fancy buildings but in parking garages, public toilets, and dead-end staircases, not statues celebrating heroic and often problematic actors and events but whimsical objects like a 1-foot cake or a pair of cherries, made from and for the materials of the modern urban environment, like concrete or water, landscaping or flowers, billboards and buses,

you name it.

Coming to Chicago, I discovered a different kind of long, rich, if perhaps overall a bit more conservative history of public art. It started when, in 1905, the philanthropist and lumber merchant Benjamin Ferguson left his estate to establish a fund committed to “the erection and maintenance of enduring statuary and monuments” in the city of Chicago, to be administered by the trustees of the Art Institute. What an extraordinary, groundbreaking, and unique gift at the time and to this day—few cities have public art endowments, let alone ones over a century old! It came about in part thanks to the advocacy of Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, a few years prior to his 1909 “Burnham plan,” which established our precious lakefront park and created a coordinated plan for the city’s public spaces. So from early on, not only was there an investment in public art in Chicago, but an understanding of its civic function and symbolism.

That said, it is the co-existence, the lively layering, of several different and important periods and models that distinguishes public art in the city of Chicago—historical

monuments and reliefs (dating from the first decades of the rebuilt city and often commissioned in relation to architectural construction), corporate investments in relation to our signature mid-century modern and international style architecture (say Richard Lippold in SOM’s Inland Steel lobby or Harry Bertioia sponsored by the Amoco Corporation), civic efforts (like the lovingly nick-named “the Picasso” or “the Bean” and most recently Kerry James Marshall’s stunning mural “Rushmore”), commissions from local artists with permanent or temporary installations (say Richard Hunt or Ruth Duckworth in the 1970s, or more recently Tony Tasset and Jessica Stockholder, especially her “Color Jam,” an all-time favorite for its fiercely urban engagement), community-driven artworks embedded in the city’s many neighborhoods (especially in the form of murals), and thoughtful support (albeit off-and-on over the decades) on the part of non-profit institutions (ranging from the vast sculpture park of Governor’s State University to our University of Chicago’s Henry Moore sculpture “Nuclear Energy,” 1966, which commemorates the first human-made self-sustaining nuclear fission, led by our former physicist Enrico Fermi, on a national historic landmark site.)



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12. Richard Serra, Seattle Right Angles Propped, 1991, installed 2019, Forged steel in two parts 110.5×243.8×30.8 cm. Photo by Michael Tropea

Pan Li: How do the public art activities of the University of Chicago fit into this public art context of the city of Chicago?

Christine Mehring: There are so many intersections, and several of these models are well represented on our campus. Four examples immediately come to mind. The Moore sculpture was purchased from the artist by the city’s Ferguson fund, and while the University initiated the commission on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Fermi’s experiment and maintains the work, it is in fact owned by the citizens of Chicago. Public art by its very nature often requires multiple institutions and people to mount joint efforts, which can be challenging for those involved and also for the quality of the art—art by consensus often unfortunately ends up being just bad art. That said, I am proud of the way our University’s Office of Civic Engagement has partnered with local community members to help conserve numerous murals on the South Side of Chicago.

And then there are two pairings that are the most beautiful mid-century ensembles of art and architecture I have ever seen and I get to live with these in walking distance from my office. One is Chicago artist Ruth Duckworth’s intimate but powerful ceramic lobby for our brutalist geophysical science building designed by I.W. Colburn: it doesn’t want to let you pass through but has you pause, it kind of sucks me up every time I go. Or Russian constructivist Antoine Pevsner’s bronze sculpture, “Construction in Space and in the Third and Fourth Dimension,” commissioned for Eero Saarinen’s Law School Quadrangle, notably at the architect’s request.

It would be impossible to pull off in this day and age. Architects can be control freaks but they are also experts in creating and shaping space and materials at a large scale; at that moment in time at mid-century, in the city of Chicago but also all over the United States, the government and institutions like

universities respected, even deferred to, contemporaneous architecture and architects, they embraced architects’ utopian beliefs in communal buildings and spaces made from newly possible forms and materials reflecting and constructing advanced, democratic societies. You can see these now historic ensembles still flourishing on many university campuses and even in the government buildings in Washington DC. As for the Pevsner and Saarinen coupling, I love the dialogue of ridged textures at different scales, and the way the sculpture’s hyperbolic curves mirror the sheltered, ambulatory experience of the building complex. It still has an otherworldly feel to it and is one of the most beautiful spaces on our campus. My Law School colleagues are so lucky.

Pan Li: Can you specifically talk about the relationship between campus public art and the educational philosophy and educational practice of a world-renowned university like the University of Chicago?

Christine Mehring: What a great question! It’s that close relationship to our university’s mission and commitments, to the production and challenge of knowledge and to rigorous inquiry, that first had me advocate for showcasing the public art we have on our campus. About eight years ago, all we had was a pdf listing a fraction of our “campus art;” today we have a public art website that I worked on with two seminars and that features student-researched and -written texts (<https://arts.uchicago.edu/public-art>). I was fortunate to work with university leaders who saw the potential when it was far from obvious, especially Daniel Diermeier (former Provost), David Fithian (former Executive Vice President), Bill Brown (former Senior Advisor to Provost for Arts), and Bill Michel (who wears many hats and runs our Logan Center for the Arts).

Public art challenges and perplexes, in intellectual and sensual ways; it prompts your curiosity and raises your spatial, material, and/or historical awareness of your surrounding; it also teaches us to return to something and look at it in different ways, discover new aspects and perspectives. In fact, public art extends the intellectual life of the university beyond classrooms, libraries, and labs, and into our everyday life. Public art also creates and shapes community, on our campus and between our university and the surrounding neighborhoods, in the present

and across time, it connects us with those who came before us and with those we share common spaces with today; along those lines, public art also shapes memories, especially of the many students at such a formative time in their lives.

I have intense memories of the Ellsworth Kelly sculpture installed at the Luis Sert apartment building I lived in as a graduate student at Harvard University. All my work on public art at the University of Chicago has been driven by my belief that it is a quintessentially UChicago art form, promoting “inquiry and impact,” to quote our President’s motto: it challenges us to look and think, and it is accessible to anyone, even during a pandemic! Paying weekly visits to our newest addition to the public art collection, Richard Serra’s “Seattle Right Angles Propped,” installed smack in the middle of our museum and art history department courtyard, has nourished my need for art over almost a year of museum closures.

Pan Li: In today’s contemporary art world, where conceptual art and participatory art prospers, it seems that the biggest challenge public art faces is how to transcend the limitations of institutional entities and maintain a relationship, a dialogue, with people in a human environment that is constantly changing. What do you think about public art as objects and public art as events?

Christine Mehring: When it comes to accessibility, I am not sure I see much of a difference between public art as object or event, actually. So, speaking first to the question of reaching broad audiences, beyond institutional limitations: that’s what all public art indeed is all about. Public art is a challenging and exciting form of art that brings together different stakeholders and opinions, because it is just that: public art. It is a way for the general public, art experts like curators and art historians, architects and urban designers, various branches of municipal government or any type of institution, to figure out what art can be and can do, to test and perhaps define their past, present, and future as a community. Here at the university, my work on public art has always involved a large number of very different audiences and units—staff, faculty, students, and leadership; architects, landscapers, and facilities; lawyers, civic engagement and global engagement;

communications and alumni relations; and many other highly specialized ones, like our parking office, registrars, or IT services.

But coming back to the “bad consensus art,” it’s also important to remember two things. One, that there has to be a place for art expertise. As an art historian researching non-traditional materials, I might be a good person to ask about what to do with a “concrete car” in storage; I love the challenge to explain why a 1957 Cadillac cast in concrete is art, and if I cannot explain it, I shouldn’t be teaching art history. Second, that each work can always only be one piece, one perspective, one moment. Over time, public art, like architecture, begins to layer and present the thrilling diversity of urban histories, environments, communities, and identities. Making public art truly “public”, namely making it relevant to many people, in the present and future, is not just the task of artists and those who commission public art, but also that of viewers, who must allow themselves to be challenged. For me, the most boring and irrelevant public art is the one I expect to see.

Now, back to your great question about public art as object versus event. I admit as an art historian and curator I have a bias for objects, they appeal to my passion for materials and all things visual (color, scale, texture). But I am also very interested in the potential of new media for public art (like the AR app commission by Jenny Holzer we just finished, which so beautifully animated some of our architectural gems on campus). One of the great things about public art is that, in most cases, you can safely touch and see it, interact with it, and do so very frequently when you live or work nearby. That is a very special way of experiencing art, to have it grow on and with you. But it has been exciting to see more participatory public art forms come about over the last decades, event-based and performance art, that goes back at least as far as Joseph Beuys’s vision for “social sculpture” and his many outdoor performances; the recent so-called relational aesthetics or public practice art is very much indebted to his legacy.

On that note: one of the most significant “public art” developments here at the University has been my colleague Theaster Gates’ tentacular art, as I like to think of it, because it extends into so many different realms. Indebted to our alumnus Dan

Peterman's practice and especially Dan's ingenious Experimental Station, Theaster's work evolved from his initial position in the University's arts programming years ago, a pre-history of his work that someone I hope one day will research and document in detail. From there, it has become a groundbreaking art practice that—in the form of his early live and work spaces “Dorchester Projects” here on the South Side, his Rebuild Foundation, and the Arts and Public Life Initiative Theaster founded in partnership with the University—encompasses numerous buildings, architectural conservation and adaptation, historical and material culture collections, public services, cultural events, youth apprenticeships—you name it. I suppose what I love most about Theaster's work is the way it straddles this divide between public art as object, as event, and as preservation; in some ways, his work is a way of rescuing past objects threatened by extinction into the future, what Sean Keller and I in an essay on Theaster's work called “rebuilding the future.” Likewise, as a historian and curator of public art, it is my passion and responsibility to test the relevance of historic public art for the present and future, and “events” are certainly one way of doing so. That's what my efforts towards conserving Wolf Vostell's colossal public sculpture “Concrete Traffic”, and curating a year of programming to celebrate its return, were all about.

Pan Li: “His experiments with concrete are a formally stunning exploration of the signifying potentials of a material that defined the shape of the twentieth century—its everyday urban experience—like few others. Concrete Traffic's recent rediscovery underscores how much we still have to learn about the transformations and transpositions of neo-avant-garde strategies across vastly disparate sites and, indeed, the world.” I am very interested in what you said in your essay about “Concrete Traffic” in Artforum magazine. It can be said that it not only summarizes the meaning of Vostell's art in the past and the future, but it is also relevant to trends in contemporary art. Can you elaborate on this point? In other words, can you also talk about the meaning of “Concrete Traffic” and its relationship to Vostell's art from your perspective?

Christine Mehring: That “Concrete Traffic” was made from concrete was certainly the most interesting and challenging aspect of

that work, and much of the conservation effort and programming focused on that material. One of my art historical research interests are non-traditional materials—art made from plastics and other materials invented in, or defining, the 20th century, art made from everyday, distinctly non-art materials like animals (say Robert Rauschenberg, Damien Hirst), chocolate (Dieter Roth, Paul McCarthy), fat and printed fabrics (Joseph Beuys' and Sigmar Polke's signature materials respectively), you name it. The leading argument about Marcel Duchamp's invention of the “ready-made” has been that it questioned the values of originality and uniqueness and drew attention to the institutional definition and value of art; alas pushed to its conclusion, that meant all that mattered was these objects were industrially, (al)ready-made—nothing more. And yet all these artists across the 20th century used materials for their particular significances and resonances, for example, for the ways in which these materials brought historically specific, by no means always univocal, meanings to their art making; they used them to play with the different meanings of certain materials at different points in time and in different contexts.

So, Vostell used concrete for its strength and even aggressive and destructive nature, for sure, but also as a way of protecting and conserving postwar industrial objects for the future; he used it to draw attention to the anonymity and sameness of an increasingly international and urban world, but also explored more culturally specific meanings, say the resonance of concrete with the German division and the Berlin Wall. Concrete is far from a mere “avant-garde” ready-made here. Nor is it a mere “neo-avantgarde” repetition of what prewar artists had already done. Concrete in Vostell's hands is very much a postwar material, associated with World War II bunkers and reconstruction, with the Cold War and the Iron Curtain in the form of the Wall, with Brutalist architecture and global urban expansion. I am currently researching such meanings of materials especially in the context of fifties, sixties, and seventies Europe, where material sensibilities were shaped by a “postwar” mentality and the context of deprivation and need, reconstruction and economic miracle; some of my first work to this end recently appeared in the exhibition catalogue for “The Allure of Matter: Material Art from China,” curated

by my colleagues Wu Hung and Orianna Cacchione at our University's Smart Museum of Art, in part because Wu Hung first drew my attention to the many similarities between postwar European art and Chinese art since the nineties.

Pan Li: German artist Joseph Beuys advocated interpreting contemporary art as “social sculpture” and he has been very important for many Chinese artists. As a German-born scholar, can you talk about how this concept connects contemporary art with public art? How do you think about the relationship between contemporary art and public art? Can it be said that public art is a direction and outlet for contemporary art?

Christine Mehring: Oh yes, since that postwar explosion of non-traditional materials, there's been an even greater proliferation in more contemporary art of the kinds of materials artists (re)use for their art. We should think about that as potentially significant too, not least in our digital and now pandemic age, where we have become so deprived of everything material: touch, textures, scale, say the temperature, weight, and solidity of materials. Again, this is where public art comes in: we can touch it and add a whole other sensual dimension to “visual” art. And coming back to your great question about public art as object and public art as event: public art “as object”, with its materiality and appeal to tactility and its ties into everyday life, opens up to and compels us to find ways of animating historic public art with programmed events or even new artist's commissions—bringing it into the present and bringing new layers of relevance to it. I do think that's where Beuys comes in, with his shared interests in meaningful materials (fat, felt, and wax, above all) and the work of “social sculpture,” a phrase meant both in the sense of a public art and a publicly relevant art. Though I would say there are only few works where he successfully merged those interests.

Pan Li: You worked for a long time with a large team of outside specialists, students, and University colleagues to conserve the work “Concrete Traffic.” Now it is placed in the entrance of the parking garage in the north of your campus, on the edge of the campus, as far as I know. Could you please talk about how this work continues to play an artistic role in such an inconspicuous position after a yearlong series of highly visible artistic



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13. Henry Moore, Nuclear Energy, installed 1967, in front of the Joe and Rika Mansueto Library, The University of Chicago. Photo by Tom Rossiter.
14. Helen Mirra, Instance the determination, 2006, text in Classics Building, The University of Chicago. Photo by Maria Perkovic.

activities?

Christine Mehring: It was an epic project, it seems, some six years of work and almost twenty collaborators at various stages, and it's not over; my research associate on that project, Lisa Zaher, and I are still completing a book anthology about Vostell and concrete, with contributions from many key collaborators, including especially Christian Scheidemann, a conservator specializing in just those non-traditional materials I am interested in too.

And yes, we worked on a fantastic year-long program, with three exhibitions, Fluxus performances, two symposia, a parade of the sculpture through the city and returning to campus, and more, again thanks to incredible support from University leadership. And you're right to wonder about the contrast with its inconspicuous position on campus: it is parked in a regular parking place in the entrance to the main but rather unremarkable parking structure for the University, next to other parked cars, with cars going in and out all day and with passers-by walking from their car to work, to the dorm nearby, or the Smart Museum. But that was the point, for Vostell and for me. Our task was to find a new site that was, one, in keeping with artistic intent (our mantra became: “it has to be where a real car could be,” because it originally had been on a parking lot near the Museum of Contemporary Art, which had commissioned it in 1970); two, that did not expose the sculpture to further unnecessary decay (on the street in rough Chicago winters



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and with snow ploughs salting the vintage car tires was out of the question); and three, one that was acceptable to all the University stakeholders (it certainly wasn't in keeping with our neo-Gothic architecture and gorgeous landscaping).

Once we became clearer about all the sites it could not be, Christian and I quickly settled on the garage, and I remain convinced the late Vostell would be enormously happy with and proud of it in that very spot. Probably half the people who drive or walk by do not notice it: it is indeed inconspicuous to the point of invisible, reinforced by the concrete parking garage enveloping the concrete sculpture—though the type of concrete is remarkably different, Vostell's is so mid-century and “hand-made” on site, the garage's is synthetic and mass fabricated. But that is part of the point: you hardly notice it, but when you do, it's intensely jarring, surprising, beautiful, perhaps to some appalling. It's the kind of challenging art I talked about earlier, the one that really makes you stop and wonder, and begin to think about concrete, traffic, arrested motion, aging, our urban environment, and so forth.

Pan Li: Recently, you have led Jenny Holzer's campus public art project “YOU BE MY ALLY”. Can you explain the relationship between the title YOU BE MY ALLY and the content of the artwork? What is the main idea of this title?

Christine Mehring: It was Jenny's pick and, in keeping with many of her other titles, it came from one of the 29 quotes she



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15. Antoine Pevsner, *Construction in Space* and in the *Third and Fourth Dimensions*, installed 1964, in front of the Laird Bell Law Quadrangle. Photo by Tom Rossiter.

incorporated into the artwork, the last line of a Sappho fragment as translated by the poet, Classicist, and translator Anne Carson. Let me say something about the origin of all those quotes first before saying more about the title's significance, because it gets to the heart of this incredible commission. In summer 2019, Jenny, who studied in our College for two years from 1970-1972, was awarded our University's Rosenberger Medal for outstanding artistic achievement. On that visit, our curator of public art, Laura Steward, and Jenny walked the campus and cooked up the idea of creating a new public artwork. We initially researched and explored several topics for the sources of her writing-based art, and eventually settled on UChicago's distinct College Core Curriculum, which teaches our students to think critically, not what to think but many different ways of thinking, by means of the shared reading and discussion of a "Core" set of texts that includes classics of Western Civilization but has also evolved

to reflect a more global perspective. Jenny wanted students and instructors to submit texts that were meaningful to them, we spent half a year gathering those, increasingly following Jenny's interest in the voices of women and diverse voices. But the surprising and exciting part was Jenny's generous and collaborative attitude: getting to the final selection of quotes was a back and forth process between the artist, studio, and our university team, which included a total of ten students over the life of the project. It was wonderful collaborating with an artist who was genuinely curious about our students, and as invested in empowering the next generation as I am as a teacher.

As to the significance of the particular title quote, *YOU BE MY ALLY*. For one, it speaks to the very work of our Core curriculum constantly reinventing itself: here's the voice of a female poet from classical antiquity traditionally dominated by male voices, calling upon others, including the reader,

to become an ally. Then, it's also a call to collaborate, as Jenny did with us, as we all did with students and faculty, and as our team did with so many partners at the University, especially the Dean and Master of the College, John Boyer and Christopher Wild. And of course, it can also be read as a call for finding common ground in the divided political and social landscape of the United States, though also, given the way "allyship" has been understood recently, a call for empathy, to advocate on behalf of those who are trying to find their voice, who may not have power, who cannot advocate for themselves. For me, bringing Jenny's writing based-work to campus was also a way of bringing an art historical ally for another campus art work I have just started trying to conserve, Helen Mirra's "Instance the Determination," which consists of quotes from John Dewey and Jane Addams painted with a stencil in different University buildings, and originally commissioned by our Franke Institute for the Humanities, under the great Jim Chandler, as a conference contribution, believe it or not!

But you also asked about the relationship of the title to the artwork itself, which was a web-based, mobile AR app that allowed you to virtually project these quotes onto seven university buildings (including the fabulous Saarinen Law School!) and also anywhere in your surroundings, outside and inside, including in your home. In that sense, *YOU BE MY ALLY* had so many other dimensions. For example, it was a way of speaking to a particular context or object you projected on, making it yours, making it your ally in your own pursuits, but also a way of that context or object speaking back to you, the app user, asking you to be their ally. Overall, the AR app as a medium was also very much one about truth and illusion: it was so jarring seeing this text appear in the camera of your phone, while seeing it wasn't really there wherever you projected it. For me, it started a dialogue with the entire history of illusionism in art and with our era of social media and "fake news." And so the call *YOU BE MY ALLY* was also a call for truth, which has always been important to Jenny Holzer's art. I have always loved and respected her work, and what an honor it was to work with her, let alone do a small part to bring about a new, groundbreaking artwork of hers.

Pan Li: From "Concrete Traffic" to "YOU BE MY ALLY", is there any potential

connection between the two campus public art projects? How do they reflect artistic propositions that you insist on?

Christine Mehring: In each case, it was an extensive process of addressing the needs and desires and potential of so many different university stakeholders, and working closely with our now well-functioning public art committee, which came about as a result of the Vostell project. For Holzer, we ran a series of townhall meetings to talk with everyone across University staff and leadership about the commission, gather feedback, and feed it back into the creation and shaping of the work. But I suppose each artwork, whether made from concrete and a Cadillac or from an AR app, also pushes the boundaries of what public art can be, its media and its audiences. And each in their own way engaged our urban environment in unexpected ways. So maybe they each brought a piece of that trailblazing kind of public art I grew up with to the United States.

Pan Li: Public Art is the only periodical on public art in China, which is cosponsored by Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts and Shanghai Painting and Calligraphy Publishing House. It has a wide range of influence in China. Public art is also playing an increasingly important role in social change of China today. On this topic, do you have anything else you would like to say to Chinese readers?

Christine Mehring: Public art, because it is public and because it has accumulated over time, asks us to take a hard look at ourselves, at the way we communally connect with our history and express our society, critically and constructively. That includes understanding and assessing which public art works, and which parts of our histories, need to be reconsidered, reframed, even removed. In recent years, many North American communities have wrestled with the racist legacies of confederate and other monuments all over our cities, in the Southern United States but also here in the North. Last year, the mayor of Chicago decided to remove temporarily two statues of Christopher Columbus and shortly thereafter announced "a racial healing and historical reckoning project," forming a commission to review Chicago's monuments and to commission "temporary public artworks that focus on a broader range of topics around COVID-19, inequality and racial reconciliation." There are so many problematic and therefore

significant art works we need to come to terms with, for example, the native American representations in the lobby of Chicago's Marquette Building. I firmly believe the best way forward must build on expert research, conversations with and among stakeholders, and considered debate.

I also feel strongly that we must avoid jumping to conclusions and embrace the co-existence of multiple, different, even temporary solutions. There is no one solution to this complex set of problems. As a German citizen and art historian working on 20th century German art, among other things, I have been puzzled, shocked at times, by the enormous historical delays in coming to terms with the histories and legacies of racism in this country. As someone who in my youth was impatient with Germany's lacking, or at least slow, "working through the past", as Theodor Adorno famously put it, I have come to realize looking back that our postwar debates in Germany in the wake of World War II and also following the fall of the wall provided a remarkable set of examples: the historic preservation of concentration camps (including devastating installations, for example of victims' hair), national and municipal commissions of Holocaust memorials in many German cities (Peter Eisenman's Holocaust memorial in Berlin but also many lesser known ones such as Esther and Jochen Gerz's gradually disappearing "Monument against Fascism" in Hamburg), and the reframing, whether in the context of on-site conservation and/or removal, of East German monuments after 1989 (as in the brilliant and highly educational installation of formerly public German monuments at the Spandau Zitadelle). Our shared interests in these histories and examples inspired my SAIC colleague and fellow public art scholar Mechtild Widrich and I some years ago to organize a series of symposia, entitled "Down with Monuments?," to bring historical depth and global perspectives to these issues so pressing in the United States right now; different cultures can and must learn from one another.