PublicArtReview

issue 42 • spring/summer 2010

Australia + New Zealand

PublicArtReview

issue 42 • spring/summer 2010 • volume 21 • number 2

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ON THE COVER
Celebrating Australia's obsession with cars, Melbourne's Freeway Art program represents one of the most impressive roadway public art collections in the world. The wondrous Craigieburn Bypass by Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects—with Corten, blue blades and colored LED lights that respond to the movement of cars—and Robert Owen's Serra-like pedestrian bridge make any trip worthwhile. See article on page 24. Photo by Peter Hyatt.

ON THE ARTIST PAGE
Brook Andrew, the prolific Australian artist comfortable in any medium, addresses the global context of Indigenous experience, often revealing uncomfortable truths. His two-page spread for *PAR* offers a sampling of his incredible body of work.
www.brookandrew.com

Jonathan Borofsky's *Male/Female* contrasts sharply with its downtown Baltimore neighbor, the historic Pennsylvania Railroad Station. For this reason, and others, the 52-foot-tall, stainless steel bisection of a man and a woman has been the subject of debate and discussion since it was erected in 2004. Only time will tell if *Male/Female* will become a valued symbolic landmark, a constant subject of ridicule, or, as sometimes happens, relocated or deaccessioned. Photo by Kim Domanski.

Monumental MARYLAND

GARY KACHADOURIAN & GLENN DIXON

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Maryland, which spans from the Atlantic to the Appalachians and surrounds the upper reaches of Chesapeake Bay, has had the highest median income in the nation for the past three years in a row. And the people of Maryland have generously supported public art, which has a long history in the Free State: John Quincy Adams himself first called Baltimore the "The Monumental City" in 1827 because of its tradition of monumental sculpture.

Artist and Baltimore resident Gary Kachadourian guides us through the public art of his city, from its historic beginnings to its latest innovations. Writer Glenn Dixon speaks to the benefits and drawbacks of federal funding for projects in Maryland's Washington, D.C. suburbs and he introduces us to important works across the state that spark wonder and debate.

Public Art on the Streets of Baltimore
From the Top Down and Bottom Up

GARY KACHADOURIAN

In the nineteenth century, Baltimore became known as "The Monumental City," as a result of copious spending on art in this pioneering railroad and port city. Art from that era is best seen in Mount Vernon Place, home to 14 bronzes and the 1829 *Washington Monument* designed by Robert Mills, who also designed the *Washington Monument* in the U.S. Capitol. Such traditional urban art production continued at a healthy pace until World War II. Since then, the creation of public art in Baltimore has been a bit bumpier.

Today, the city is seeing an upswing in production, including the recent installation of a number of large-scale public sculptures, the beginning of a reworked and reinvigorated city percent-for-art program, a healthy municipal mural program, a temporary public sculpture program, and the constant output of unauthorized public art, including graffiti art and conceptualist public interventions by young artists.

ABOVE: One of Motobus' *Party People* from their Baltimore street art sticker campaign.
BELOW: Shaun Flynn's *Ride* sticker, one of the longest-running campaigns in Baltimore.

ABOVE: Photo by Jon MacNair. BELOW: Photo courtesy the author. OPPOSITE PAGE: Photo by Jim Burger.

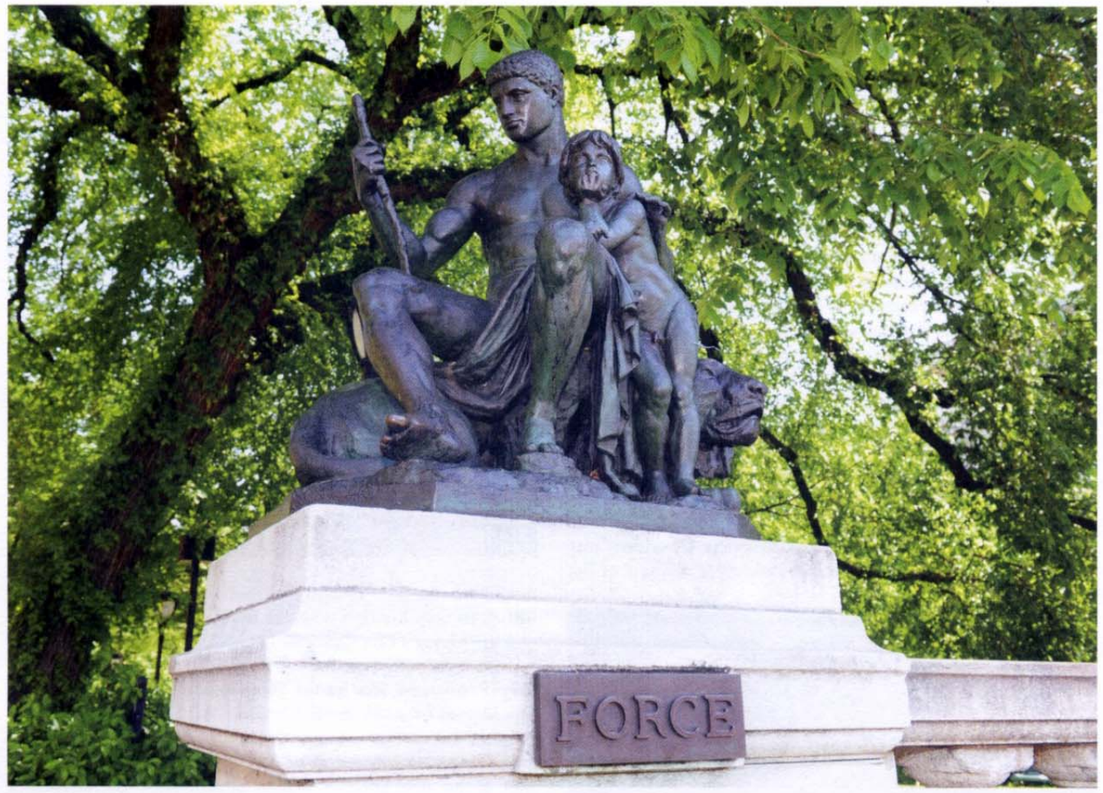
Home-Grown Campaigns

An ongoing project by Shaun Flynn exemplifies the solo artist enacting a subtle intervention. In a series of works he meticulously applies small pieces of reflective tape onto leaves, dirt, and rocks along a section of rural-feeling Falls Road near the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). These installations create an optic moment for the driver at night. The most recent version, from the summer of 2009, was a blue, green, yellow, orange fade that occurred over a quarter-mile stretch of the road.

Two veteran sticker artists have launched sticker campaigns that tweak the medium by either obscuring or eliminating the straight "tag" that is usually its central construct. *ride* is both the name of the artist and the only word to appear on one of the longest-running sticker campaigns in Baltimore. While on the surface *ride* is a straight tag in various lower-case, two-color formats, it is produced with the elegance of a corporate logo managed by a first-rate design firm. Placed on a utility box, it takes on an official presence. This ambivalence between corporate and street creates a commentary on how both aspects insert themselves in the public view.

Party People, a sticker campaign by motobus, depicts small, friendly figures with dunce caps. Rendered in black on white vinyl, they are usually placed low on utility poles and sometimes even more charmingly on ground-level utility covers. These are happy, humble, and humanist, the perfect foil to the cooler, false-official nature of the *ride* campaign.

The more problematic field of graffiti, most often illegal, is addressed at one visible site near Howard Street and North Avenue. The owner of Load of Fun Studios has obtained permission from the neighborhood, the city, and adjacent building owners to make the rear walls of a cluster of buildings and an alleyway a free zone for spray paint murals, creating a varied, visible, and legal display of this form of public art. To see a range of less legal painting, one can walk from there across the Howard Street bridge to see murals under the Jones Falls Expressway on a regular walkway for MICA students.



Antoine-Louis Barye (1795-1875), *Force*, 19th century, Mount Vernon Place, Baltimore.

Collective Spaces

A recent local outgrowth in public art is new public art spaces created and run by artist collectives. Participation Park, for example, is a working farm/garden run by the Baltimore Development Cooperative (BDC), a play on Baltimore Development Corporation, the City of Baltimore's independent development branch. The park—built as a meeting place for community people, artists, and others—is located on a plot of land in east Baltimore in the shadow of the city penitentiary. It's also a food source for the neighborhood, with surplus harvest sold to help support the project. Last year BDC installed a geodesic dome made of recycled materials in front of the Baltimore Museum of Art (the BMA also has an excellent sculpture garden of major twentieth-century sculptures) for the Sondheim Prize exhibition, an annual $25,000 prize for regional artists which the collective won.

Tinges Commons, another collective art space, exists on an adopted vacant lot next to the artist/organizers' home. There, an ongoing series of temporary sculpture installations are accompanied by sign panel installations. Current Gallery recently ended its tenure in a city-owned building that was offered rent-free until the time the site was redeveloped. Now Andrew Liang's mural of Whac-A-Moles on the façade, painted for the final exhibition of this artist-run space in the summer of 2009, quietly awaits the wrecking ball.

Event-Driven Art

In Baltimore, event-based art continues to grow in the number of both participants and attendees each year.

The Kinetic Sculpture Race, a project of American Visionary Art Museum (which also has an excellent outdoor sculpture collection), involves 35 to 40 human-powered sculptures that must travel on asphalt, dirt, and water in a race across downtown Baltimore. This annual event has become an essential outlet for the gear-head sculptors and ephemeral performance artists to commingle and stretch their skills in a highly public and somewhat surreal interface of the arts, populist ideology, and public spectacle.

The Transmodern Festival—a five-day, volunteer-organized, performance art festival—culminates with the Pedestrian Service Exquisite. This one-day program consists of performances, street interactions, and one-day installations on annually chosen sites.

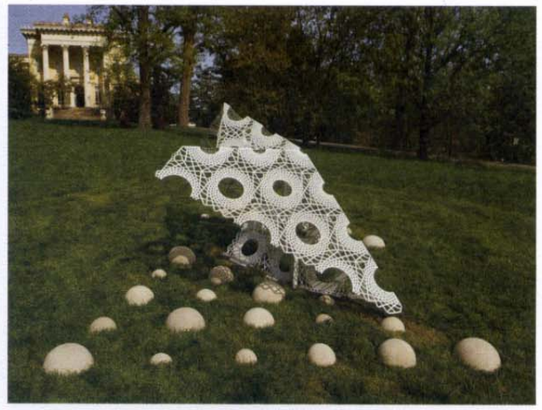
Midway and the Full Service Garage are both parts of Artscape, a huge festival that's become a mid-July Baltimore institution. Midway utilizes modified city festival booths as installation spaces connected through an architect-designed form. The Full Service Garage mixes social activism with art installations in a parking garage. Both face off installation/performance/activist art actions against a huge cross section of the general public with pieces such as The Missoula Oblongata's *The Heartbreak Café*, where the artists enact breakups with festival goers, and an air-conditioned room constructed and monitored by the Baltimore Hostel where visitors can take a nap.

Temporary Installations

The steadiest of Baltimore's temporary public art programs is the Artscape Outdoor Sculpture exhibition, launched in 1982. In recent years it has been expanded to become the Baltimore Sculpture Project and now installs a rotating collection of sculptures at locations around the city. Standout works include a six-foot-diameter concrete meatball topped with sauce, by Virginia Warwick, facing a phantasmagoric hammered and soldered sheet lead form on rockers by Richard Roussell; a sheet copper mountain form by Coral Lambert; and Charlie Brouwer's giant wooden walking man with a huge leaf under his arm, a piece that creates a truly strange sight at night.

Sculpture at Evergreen, a biannual site sculpture exhibition instituted a decade ago on the grounds of Evergreen Museum and Library, which occupies the nineteenth-century country home of one of Baltimore's most important railroad magnates, uses guest curators Jennie Fleming and Ronit Eisenbach to select proposals that address the history of the site. This year's exhibition will have 10 new installations.

Another new site project is Axis Alley, an exhibition of often very ephemeral installations in the alleys, vacant lots, and backyards of vacant houses of three contiguous blocks of North Calvert Street. This project, involving 19 artists, was single-handedly organized by Sarah Doherty, a resident of the neighborhood who recently moved to Baltimore to teach at MICA, in coordination with the Baltimore Housing Authority and the Mayor's City Council.



ABOVE: Yolande Daniels, *Tea Cozy*, 2010, Evergreen Museum and Library.
MIDDLE: Michael Owen's mural along Eastern Avenue, 2009, Baltimore's longest mural.
BELOW: Tom Miller, *However Far The Stream Flows, It Never Forgets Its Source*, 1991.

ABOVE: Photo courtesy Evergreen Museum & Library, The Johns Hopkins University, by Will Kirk. MIDDLE: Photo by Matthew Saindon. BELOW: Photo by Shawn James.

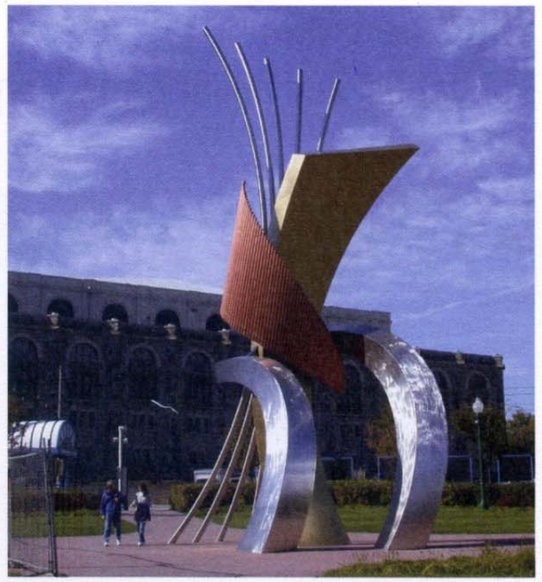
City-Produced Works on Streets and Walls

The biggest event in the Baltimore public art world in recent years is the restructuring of the city's one-percent-for-public-art program administered by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts (BOPA), which spearheaded the program's restructuring, in conjunction with a newly expanded Public Art Commission.

One upcoming project is an ambitious streetscape on North Charles Street in the area of Johns Hopkins University, to be collaboratively designed by landscape architects and a soon-to-be-selected artist. Another is the Druid Hill Park gateway and conservatory, which will include a 73-foot colonnade by William Cochran. Glass panels on reclaimed cast iron columns will depict the history of the Victorian park, an important recreational place for Baltimore's African-American community. This site will also include a 17- by 30-foot oval mosaic terrace by one of Baltimore's best-known living artists, Joyce J. Scott. The terrace will be her first outdoor public work in her native city.

Murals in the city are predominately produced through the Baltimore Mural Program of BOPA, though there are some excellent independently funded murals painted by artist Michael Kirby.

Two recent and important projects are Baltimore's longest mural, by Michael Owen, on the walls of the Eastern Avenue underpass, and the restoration of two seminal murals by Tom Miller at the intersection of Harford Road and North Avenue. While these are both on high-visibility sites, one of the strengths of the program is its ability to place art in less "important" locations. Some of the exceptional murals recently completed in less visible settings include a pair by Danamarie Hosler and Nelson Rivas in the neighborhood of Waverly, an astounding forest-at-dawn mural on a vacant section of Pennsylvania Avenue by Lyle Kissack, and Donald Tyson-Bey's historical mural in the newly refurbished market area of the same avenue.



LEFT: James Earl Reid's sculpture of Billie Holiday (1985) on Pennsylvania Avenue.
RIGHT: Rodney Carroll, *Firebird*, 2005, bronze and stainless steel.

LEFT: Photo by CHAP. RIGHT: Photo courtesy the artist.

Bronze and Monumental Sculpture

Baltimore's resurgence of traditional bronze sculptures of historical figures includes Rodney Carroll's life-size statue of William Donald Schaefer in the Inner Harbor. A former mayor, Schaefer promoted the restoration of the Inner Harbor. Earlier in the same year, the Billie Holiday sculpture on Pennsylvania Avenue underwent a major restoration. This sculpture by James Earl Reid was originally erected in 1985 to a great deal of controversy over the shortening of the pedestal and omission of a series of reliefs depicting songs from the singer's career, most notably a hanging man for the song "Strange Fruit."

Coming up, there will be an installation of a sculpture of Frank Zappa, the Baltimore-born musician, a gift from the city of Vilnius, Lithuania. A sculpture by Simmie Knox of Clarence "Du" Burns, Baltimore's first African-American Mayor, will be installed in the Inner Harbor.

The past five years have been good for contemporary monumental sculpture with three new, large pieces added to the city. Alice Aycock's *Swing Over* is a series of aluminum roller coaster rails depicting the flight patterns of mating hummingbirds. Installed above the entrance canopy of the multistory George H. Fallon Federal Office Building, the work was funded by the U.S. General Services Administration. Rodney Carroll's 50-foot-tall *Firebird*, a towering mix of bronze and stainless steel, was funded by the State of Maryland and a private developer. Jonathan Borofsky's 52-foot-tall *Male/Female*, funded by the Municipal Art Society of Baltimore, is a machined aluminum cutout of a man and a woman bisecting each other.

• • •

The Borofsky has been an object of concerted hatred, occasional love, and constant discussion since its installation in 2004. The anger towards the piece centers on its close proximity to the historic 1911 Pennsylvania Railroad Station, but it has to be deeper than just that. This sculpture seems to touch a nerve with everyone and raises an interesting question about what public art is and maybe always has been: Is it possible to make truly meaningful public art without risking severe dissension? Whether this particular piece is ever accepted by the community, something that no one will know for a very long time, it does raise the question of whether a prolonged period of controversy about a public work helps etch it into the public conscience. One interesting and comic indicator of this possible entrenchment is the cover of this year's *Baltimore City Paper*'s "Best Of" issue, on which the sculpture shares space in a cartoon world with the historic Domino Sugar sign and Bromo Seltzer Tower, both less-than-tasteful commercial landmarks from the past that are now beloved Baltimore icons.

In the end, whether it's an almost invisible, obsessive installation on an urban back road or a gigantic human form looming over a central area of the city, the real joy in public art is the simple, often chance interactions between the art object and the people. These interactions with both the huge and the tiny are occurring in Baltimore with consistency and intelligence. That's a great thing—and a great reason to look for the next public installation.

GARY KACHADOURIAN *was the visual arts coordinator for the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts from 1987 to 2009. He is a working artist and independent curator and is currently pursuing an MFA degree at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.*

The Free State:
Public and Semipublic Art in Maryland

GLENN DIXON

Public art follows funding, so it's no surprise that Maryland's Washington, D.C. suburbs see a high concentration of activity. From the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) offices in downtown Silver Spring to the vast Food and Drug Administration campus under way in White Oak, Uncle Sam's reach stretches beyond the federal city and even outside the Beltway. The General Services Administration (GSA) Art in Architecture Program has an impressive record of locating ambitious projects by well-known artists in and around government buildings.

The problem is one of public access. Taxpayers may gain entry to the grounds of the U.S. Courthouse in Greenbelt simply by walking up to the guard booth next to the parking lot and explaining that they've come to look at the Jim Sanborn installation. Suitland's new Census Bureau complex is another matter entirely. Since 9/11, Marylanders in the more populous parts of the state have grown accustomed to routine bag checks and, at higher-security facilities, the ritual of having one's briefcase, coat, wallet, cell phone, keys, pocket change, and belt run down a conveyor into the maw of an X-ray scanner. But the Census Bureau is a Level IV facility. Guards outside, under orders to neither confirm nor deny the presence of any person or the existence of any department inside the building, refer potential viewers to the agency's website, which automatically generates messages such as, "Your question has been received. You should expect a response from us within 24 hours."

Responses, however, are not forthcoming. Instead, to see works by Anita Glesta, Jason Salavon, and Sam Gilliam, you need to track down an appointment with a GSA representative.

Access is easiest where tourism is most expected. Shutterbugs get no grief in historic downtown Frederick, roughly 50 miles from both Baltimore and D.C., or at Gathland State Park, about 20 miles farther down the road from Frederick. They go similarly unmolested at National Harbor, a new simulated downtown development in Prince George's County anchored by a convention center and packed with hotels and upscale chain restaurants.

Some developers, however, want the cachet of supporting public art but won't stand for the touristic interactions that naturally follow. In Chevy Chase, at The Shops at Wisconsin Place, you can recite the scrolling words of Athena Tacha's *Light Obelisk* into your iPod nano's voice recorder, but if you opt for video, you're asked either to desist or to take time out of your day for a talk with building management.

The dispatch with which you're served notice indicates the intensity with which you're being surveilled in pseudo-public spaces. But even that barely raises an eyebrow these days. Negotiating issues of national security, intellectual property, and individual rights has become a naggingly familiar duty for those who would undertake the complex navigation of public and private space and the nebulous zone in between.

GLENN DIXON *is based in Silver Spring, Maryland and has written for* Artforum, Village Voice, *and* The New York Times.

The following photo tour highlights the variety of public art in the greater state of Maryland.

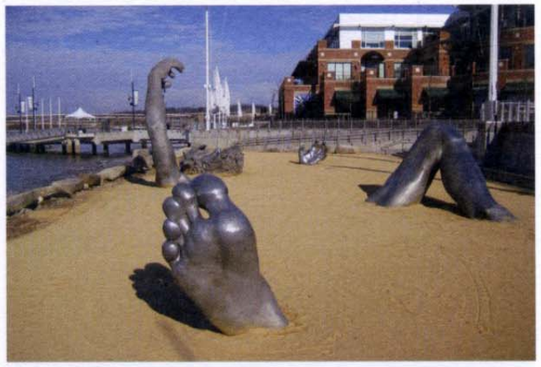
William Cochran, *The Dreaming*, 2007
▸ Frederick, Maryland

The seat of Frederick County is besotted with history, and much of it—glassmaking, clockmaking, textiles, the village planning of Native Americans, the banjar music of slaves, the avant-jazz of Lester Bowie—is artfully composed into *The Dreaming*, a shimmering, painted-glass panel that William Cochran has installed on the side of the former Francis Scott Key Hotel. Already a local hero for 1998's *Community Bridge*, which incorporates symbols of community solicited from the public into a trompe l'oeil landmark that attempts to span long-standing divides of race and class, Cochran has now asked the people to reveal their hopes for the future, which are etched into the façade below the three-story panel. Participants' comments were edited into a "sort of blank verse poem" in an effort "to capture the poetry of everyday language." Making contemporary art that is sensitive to the visual aesthetic and official protections that apply in a historic district is no mean feat, but Cochran has pulled it off, scaling the painted background of the piece to mesh with the brick next to it. "It's meant to hide in plain sight," he says.

Photo courtesy the author.

George Alfred Townsend
***War Correspondents Memorial Arch*, 1896**
▸ Frederick, Maryland

Combining his initials with an obscure Biblical reference, George Alfred Townsend became GATH, one of the most prolific of Civil War correspondents and a journalistic fount who spewed forth up to 18,000 words a day. He also was an inveterate architectural dabbler, producing various structures—house, stable, outbuildings, a mausoleum that lies bare—on his 100-acre spread near Burkittsville, along the Appalachian Trail. The most distinctive is the *War Correspondents Memorial Arch*, a monument to his fellow scribblers. With its crenellated tower, horseshoe arch, and tier of smaller Romanesque arches, it reads as the façade to a fanciful folk-art palazzo. Names of writers and artists fill panels on the rear of the structure. Sculptural elements on the front include a figure of Mercury set into a niche and a pair of high-relief terra cotta horse heads, nostrils aflare. For clarity of purpose, "War" and "Correspondents" have been incised into fields of brick set into the stone above the main arch. A short drive from Antietam National Battlefield, home to countless more conventional memorials, Townsend's oddball arch pays tribute to chroniclers of war from the celebrated Mathew Brady to scores like GATH himself—his own name is included—who have lapsed into obscurity. Photos courtesy the author.



J. Seward Johnson, *The Awakening*, 1980 (relocated 2008)
▸ National Harbor, Maryland

Perhaps no one better embodies the central paradox of public art—that it is art for a nonart public—than J. Seward Johnson. The Johnson & Johnson heir is so nicely bankrolled that when his contribution to the 1980 International Sculpture Conference Exhibition, *The Awakening*, proved a hit with the *hoi polloi*, he simply left it on loan with the National Park Service for 27 years. But plans for a National Peace Garden at Hains Point prompted Johnson's Sculpture Foundation to put the rousing giant that delighted picnickers up for sale. Three-quarters of a million dollars later, it has been uprooted from its home in the District and wedged into a sliver of "beach" at this multibillion-dollar adventure in destination-building. The sculpture's siting is unfortunate, but people still line up to take snapshots that make it appear as though they are being plucked up by the giant's hand. As is par for the course with Johnson's work, it is clumsy, kitschy, and utterly beloved. Photos courtesy the author.

Richard Deutsch, *Against the Day*, 2006
▸ Chevy Chase, Maryland

Richard Deutsch's tasteful yet playful sculptural installation *Against the Day* in the corporate mini-plaza that is Johnston Park was named for a Thomas Pynchon novel, but a different text governs its use. "The fountain and sculpture surfaces are slippery. Do not climb or play on sculptures and do not run through the fountain. Do not drink the water. We cannot be responsible for any misuse of the fountain." So say ugly little signs that speak for the Chevy Chase Land Company (CCLC), despite the fact that no such warnings accompany the benches, paths, water features, and artworks in most public spaces. And despite the fact that photos on Deutsch's website of the sleek, multihued granite forms show children engaged in most of the prohibited behaviors (not that the CCLC condones photography either), what is evident is that the killjoys who commissioned the work failed to comprehend the invitation Deutsch's sculpture would extend to the public. If the Chevy Chase Land Company owned the National Mall, it would erect signs reading, "Do not look at yourself in the Reflecting Pool. It is not our fault if you drown." Photo courtesy the author.

Athena Tacha, *Friendship Plaza*, 2000–2009
▸ Chevy Chase, Maryland

Adjacent to Richard Deutsch's *Against the Day* is another private domain masquerading as a public asset: Athena Tacha's *Friendship Plaza*. Here, the owners warn, "For Public Safety and Personal Injury [sic] | ABSOLUTLEY [sic] NO SKATEBOARDING POLICE TAKE NOTICE." It's a pity that New England Development and its partners haven't made the same commitment to literacy that they have to safety. If they had, perhaps the letters on Tacha's *Light Obelisk*, the centerpiece of *Friendship Plaza*, wouldn't creep by at a second-grade level. (Try spending three seconds per word on "NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS ARE BEING DESTROYED." The words become ornamental.) The LED tower stands in the middle of a fountain in the rather nicely laid out South Plaza, which abuts an arcade that blooms at night with staggered chevrons of shifting light. At the other end of the arcade, you can stand at a railing that overlooks Tacha's *WWW-Tower*, a stalky stack of primary-hued Ws, which also flash on after dark. A decade after its conception and well past the point at which the Internet was novel, it seems rather dated. Photo by Richard E. Spear.

Jim Sanborn, *Indian Run Park*, 1995
▸ Greenbelt, Maryland

Best known for *Kryptos*, a 1990 cryptographic sculpture at the Central Intelligence Agency's Langley, Virginia, headquarters, Jim Sanborn employed similar formal means for his *Indian Run Park* installation outside the United States Courthouse in Greenbelt. But this time, he had no qualms about offering a translation of the stenciled text piercing the bronze cylinder that is the focal point of the small park. During the day, sun beams through lines from the *Iroquois Book of the Great Law*, said to have inspired Benjamin Franklin's work on the U.S. Constitution: "The different nations, will become just a single one, and the great law will come into being..." At night, the words are illuminated from within. Sanborn has long been interested in the manifestation of distant forces, in this case emphasizing the geographic and philosophical links between ancient Native cultures and the mongrelized America of the present day. Similarly, at NOAA, his 1993 *Coastline* transmits the wave patterns at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, to a rock-rimmed pool that climate bureaucrats pass on their way to the office. Photo courtesy the author.

Gabriele Schmidt-Heins, *On Site*, 1991,
▸ Rockville, Maryland

As is true anywhere, but seems doubly so in Maryland, the public artscape comprises many history-lesson murals, rainbow-coalition mosaics, whimsical animals, and figurative sculptures of people enjoying themselves—well-intentioned, open-hearted, "accessible" pieces devoid of serious interest. And many of these works are sponsored at the municipal level—Annapolis, Rockville, and Gaithersburg being typical offenders. Despite the unimaginative title *On Site* and an artist's statement that resorts to spiritualist numerology, Gabriele Schmidt-Heins' installation is a welcome exception. Installed in the corner of a neighborhood park in an ordinary mid-century subdivision, five 15-foot truncated triangles of concrete define a space distinct from and yet linked to the soccer and baseball fields nearby. Aluminum-and-Lucite facing articulates the vertical front of each triangle into a geometric series of doubles (or halves, depending on whether you read top to bottom or vice versa) and orient the viewer toward the inner circle described by the arrangement of pillars. The scale of the piece suits the site well, creating the intimacy and muted grandeur of an abstract gazebo ceilinged by the sky. Photo courtesy the author.

Anita Glesta, *Census*, 2008
▸ Suitland, Maryland

In the lobby of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's Census headquarters, Jason Salavon's backlit abstraction *American Varietal (US Population, by County, 1790–2000)* turns survey results into glowing ribbons of color. Outside, Glesta's seven-acre *Census* installation takes up the most fundamental tools of census work: numerals. A wheelchair-friendly ramp winds its way from 1 to 8, while stairs provide a more direct route. Framing the 1, tile-faced trapezoidal berms reminiscent of Indian mounds pay homage to counting systems ancient and modern: Sumerian, Native American, Roman, and so on. Some of the large Arabic numerals, constructed of stripes of light- and dark-gray brick, function as diversions from the meandering path; others rise to form benches where workers can relax, talk, and read. More tile-covered slabs occupy the pachysandra-covered ramps that slope down toward a sunken walkway connecting wings of the building. One of these panels depicts the full run of numerals, highlighting 9 and 0, this last representing a radical concept indispensable to the history of mathematics. Overlaying the digits are shadows of human figures, reminders of the public purpose all this enumeration is intended to serve. Photo courtesy the artist.

Albert Paley, *The Beckoning*, 2008
▸ National Harbor, Maryland

After J. Seward Johnson's *The Awakening*, much of the rest of the Harbor art budget went to Albert Paley. Two of his eagle sculptures soar incongruously, wings outstretched, high above the first store in the country devoted to marshmallow Peeps. Where he really earns his keep, however, is at the merge from the Beltway off-ramps, home to the mammoth *Beckoning*. Downtown, at the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, his *Portal Gates* have been a signature piece for decades. Proving he still knows how to make an entrance, Paley has built *The Beckoning* for speed. Isolated in a triangular median liberally fertilized by the Canada goose, the towering assemblage of painted steel isn't intended for pedestrian viewing. This is art as highway signage, an 85-foot beacon to passing motorists, the flag of commerce planted by the Potomac. National Harbor has learned spectacle and artifice from Las Vegas, but it is themed as the anti–Sin City, a post-Baudrillardian Bizarro World where lust, greed, and frontier spirit are supplanted by business needs, rectitudinous consumption, and an off-the-rack patriotism as red-white-and-blue as Old Glory itself. The only sure bet? What happens in National Harbor shows up on your expense account. Photo courtesy the author.