A CITY OF (ANTI-)HEROES

The Politics of Public Art in Hungary

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Abstract

This paper examines the diversity of the political aspect of public art in Budapest, Hungary, and especially the different socio-spatial consequences implied by the various practices of erecting and placing (anti-)heroes within the city-text. Accordingly, I have devised a model where the categories of “official”, “personal” and “commercial” intend to reflect to a basic disparity between public and private (either in the sense of privacy or in its most important manifestation, that of the logic of market) perspectives, however they are intentionally built upon a curve suggesting a dual tendency on the one hand, from national to global levels, and on the other hand, from politics to commerce. Moreover, during the analysis, this simple opposition between the public and private sectors becomes more tinged through applying theories regarding the interpretation of public space(s) and accessibility of art which reveal and set up other, new (dis)connections as well. Thus, this thesis encounters the main task to detect and identify how the different projects (re)formulate and problematize their public dimensions and how audience as such is (re)interpreted either in terms of exclusion or inclusion.

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Introduction

Public art as a category can embrace a broad variety of practices, however its complexity is inherent not just in the wide-ranging possibility lying in the alliance of art, city and public spaces, but in the phenomenon that the genre tends to be employed by different fields as well. Glancing through some events of this month (May 2009) definitely strengthens that the numerous usages of public art indeed exist, and what is even more, can be present at one and the same time in the urban realm(s). The unveiling of a Radnóti Statue by the head of Ministry of Education and Culture, the transformation of personally beloved works of art into banners and then the march protesting for high-standard artistic actions (organized by the MKKP [Hungarian Two-tailed Dog's Party]), the appearance of a business-based project, like the "Homeless-Elephant", – are all diverse initiatives realized in diverse forms. Moreover, these projects illustrate not just the multiplicity of public art, but the fact that public spaces, instead of being stable and steady, are put moment by moment in motion, that they become constantly (re)written within the city-text (Palonen 2002). Thus, following the argument of Rosalyn Deutsche (1996) who almost uniquely approaches this topic from a multiple perspective, that of the art history and political-sociology, I draw on the ideas of Lefebvre (1991) and Castells (1982), and state that (urban) space is the product of certain (counter)practices rather than simply a physical form, that (urban) space is produced rather than given, and hence from the start political. No wonder, the standpoint of my examination offered naturally itself, however the political aspect of public art will not be limited to this starting point.

Surprisingly, in Hungary, in spite of the fact that the emergence of the overlap of art and public space goes back to the nineteenth century, it is not a long time since art has been as prominent in the public spaces as it is now. Whereas in other places well-legible paths led from a traditional understanding of public art, that of the display of sculptures glorifying a

version of national history, to more multifaceted definitions, this route in Hungary was not just winding, but turns many times still back to the point of departure. And indeed, the dominance of public art in its classical, 19th century understanding – defined as a sculpture erected generally by the state in a public space – was quite long-lasting in Hungary, and the emphasis became just slowly transferred, in a sense it is still on a way to transfer, first, on the urban location (public art as "art in public spaces" [Lacy 1995:21]), and then on an interaction (public art as "art in public interests" [Raven cited in Lacy 1995:25]). I am not stating that these main steps are not present elsewhere jointly, on the contrary, I just notice the symptom that reaching the co-presence of all these phenomena was much more problematic, and full of obstacles in Hungary. However, instead of focusing on reasons why the changing conditions of public art were articulated so ponderously, in this thesis I aim to concentrate on the relationship between the different usages of the above outlined "idioms".

These (dis)connections become especially interesting if we take into account how public art as such becomes multidisciplinary, and how it is taking on tasks that were formerly ascribed to other public domains, such as urban planning (e.g. public art is increasingly deployed for developing cities and regions) and sociology (e.g. public art appears as the voice of dominants/oppressed). Moreover, it needs to be also highlighted that each formation of public art include a strong political engagement: they mirror and/or question certain ideas about identity and the current processes of inclusion and exclusion in Hungary. In accordance with these my research question mainly and foremost is that what kind of different socio-spatial consequences are implied by the different understandings of politics of public art.

In order to give a proper analysis of the phenomenon, public art will be studied and approached not (solely) in terms of an art theoretical discourse or curatorial practice, but on the basis of a more sociological and political-philosophical attitude. Accordingly, I have devised three models that endeavour to describe the basic political aspects of public art

suggesting that this kind of art, originally an instrument within the politics of nation-states, more and more has the potentiality to be connected to private issues, either in the sense of privacy or in its most important manifestation, that of the logic of market. Thus, the categories: official, personal and commercial are referring exactly to the tendency that political statements and assumptions can appear apart from the sphere of politics, either in personal revelations, or in the business undertakings as well. However, although these formations are indeed sharply differentiated, the unambiguously privileged position of the state also has to be noticed (after all, one needs authorization from the state to install anything in public space). During the examination each of these theoretical frameworks will be supported with one practical example: my interpretations assigned to a national monument (Liberty Statue), an issue-based public art festival (Polifónia) and a globally promoted project (CowParade) will stand there as ultimate illustrations of the models.

As it should be clear by now, the three cases are not just simply the alternatives of one phenomenon, that of the public art, but they put into operation entirely different standpoints, – they emphasize three very different aspects of public art. Thus, analyzing these patterns will force me to mobilize theories from different fields, and although I will elaborate the first case through its connection to memory, the second one to intimacy, and the third one to commercialism, I will have the same questions in mind throughout the whole study: What kind of processes causes the incorporation of art into urban spaces? How the adoption of public art affects the public space regarding ownership, management and identity? How do people perceive and react to these public art projects either in terms of agreement or disagreement?

In accordance with these, after clarifying the basic theoretical positions, in the first chapter I will introduce the Liberty Statue as a symbolic monument of the Soviet regime and as the manifestation of national identity composed by the Soviet authorities, but at the same

time, I will discuss some alternative narratives that suggest the rejection of this kind of state-narrative. Then, I will show how the changes in political regime brought with them changes in the organization of public space, and how – similarly to the former point – did nowadays the rewritten structure of the statue counteract. In contrast to this rather monophonic system, the second chapter intends to present a project whose name, Polyphony, already in itself implies some changing conditions. This part will concentrate on how the Soros Foundation initialized a festival whose realization, although surrounded with scandals, could be understood as presenting diversity within the city through personal statements of artists. In this, intimacy is not seen as something obscene that excludes public interaction, but rather as something that actually needs to be taken seriously on a public level: a socializing art that is not made for an audience but instead creates an audience. The addressees in the third chapter will be broadened to global dimensions, – the section is dedicated to the scrutiny of the inter(trans)national web of CowParade where financial benefits became the one and only aims to be reached. The main question to be answered will be how the project managed to mobilize a complex economical system.

On the basis of all these, the structure of the thesis will represent a possibility to look at the way in which the different political aspects of public art are related, on the one hand, generally to ideas about the city and urban politics, and on the other hand, particularly to legitimizing discourses, to new notions of publicness and to the implications of processes such as globalization and commercialization. Besides the fact that in Hungary the discussion about public art is very limited and biased (generally examined – if at all – just on the theoretical field of art history), such a systematic account about the here discussed phenomena have never been given, – in this respect the research will definitely contribute to fill this gap.

Theoretical Framework

Since the core of my analysis can be grasped from a politico-sociological standpoint, it is crucial to discuss how art and public space, the two basic components of public art, already in themselves include these perspectives. Thus, here, I will bring together the relevant theories and concepts dealing with the political characteristics, if not essence of these constituents, and further, I will point to ideas that can shed light on the certain (possible) consequences of this political feature. Taking art and urban space as the starting point of this theoretical clarification hopefully will help to expose and reveal my main positions taken up concerning the examination of the politics of public art.

The Politics of Art

The connection between art and politics is not simply about a direct alliance, and what is even more, not about the different scales of their amalgamations (be that either the practice of patronage of the Medicis in the Renaissance, or the commissions of other great powers like the Soviets in the twentieth century), but about a cultural policy whose values and principles are quite telling in every epoch. From this perspective, it is considerably interesting to note how the increasing endeavor to promote cultural diversity and accessibility becomes realized (or, on the contrary, remains unfeasible), and how art is intended to be more and more available to everyone (nevertheless becomes a luxury). Yet, this voluntary policy strongly confronts Bourdieu's theory about social stratification whose introduction will remain not without consequences regarding public art as well.

Pierre Bourdieu in his study (The Love of Art, 1990) about the "European art museums and their public" attempts to demonstrate how class distinctions have a determining force in the domain of legitimate culture. Refuting the claims of the "massmediologists" regarding the cultural democratisation and homogenisation brought by mass culture, Bourdieu

strongly emphasizes the fact that even in the absence of any formal barriers to access high culture, in the form of admission fees or cultural provision, the tendency to consume consecrated works of art is still closely related to social class and education. Thus, The Love of Art seeks to elaborate a statistical model predicting the probability of going to a gallery according to the variables of class, age, sex and education, and culminates in the recognition that the cultured bourgeoisie is far more likely to visit art galleries on a regular basis than their working-class counterparts (Bourdieu 1990:14-36). Furthermore, Bourdieu highlights the annoying nature of the gallery environment, the sense of respectful distance it demands from the public, and the fact that few, if any, concessions are made to those working-class visitors who lack an intimate knowledge of art and artists. As a consequence, the appreciation of a work of art became, Bourdieu argues, an act of decipherment that requires the possession of the requisite cultural code (i.e. the ability to appreciate fine art is an innate "gift" [Bourdieu 1990:54]). No wonder, following his argument, members of the bourgeoisie are far more likely to own such a code,

> "not simply because of their longer exposure to former education but also thanks to a more general familiarity with the things of taste and culture, an aesthetic disposition they had acquired in earliest childhood by inhabiting a cultured environment of which high art and culture formed an integral element" (Lane 2000:52).

In accordance with these, the aesthetic disposition came to be part of the bourgeoisie habitus, thus the bourgeoisie can take advantage of the opportunity, can exploit and reproduce its dominant status.

Although Bourdieu's critique concentrates foremost on institutions where the presence of art is quite evident, i.e. unquestionable for everyone, he strikingly does not take into account the possibility of being not totally aware of this situation. He remains silent concerning the case when people do not recognize or consider art as art which distinction

would and will become a crucial factor in the analysis of public art as well. Thus, while applying Bourdieu's approach to the realm of public spaces, on the one hand, I will emphasize that in contrast to museums whose entering demands indeed a kind of faith in these buildings, public spaces are free from such stipulations, and on the other hand, I will examine whether Bourdieu's observations hold only in designated places of art or within the urban space as well, i.e. analyse to what extent did or did not the certain public art projects manage to achieve a greater measure of cultural democratisation.

The Politics of Public Space

For a long time, the understanding of public space – guiding also the concepts in the discourse on publicness – was determined by Jürgen Habermas (1992), who in his analysis defines this public entity as a common sphere in which rational debates are conducted, free of prescriptive forces. Although Habermas' model is embedded within a historical review, that of the phenomena preceding and following the public sphere, his argument clearly points to the statement that the essence of this kind of space can be understood as an ideal arena in which critical dialogue among citizens was made possible. Although the importance and long-lasting effects of his theory are undeniable, this enlightened form of "civilized publicness" seem far removed from either the theory or the practice of the present day.

> "Neo-liberal forces, such as privatization and commercialization, are torpedoing the idealized modern concepts of the public sphere, which is being increasingly defined, in terms of a practical project, by acute expectations concerning security and threat. At the same time, public space is being claimed by groups and audiences such as illegal aliens, refugees and migrants, who are not accounted for, or only minimally, in official policy dealing with this space" (Seijdel 2009).

And indeed, current thinking about the public sphere and publicness is no longer based on models of harmony in which consensus predominates, – instead of the supposed unity the emphasis is shifted on a certain dividedness, sharply differentiating this kind of public space from the Habermasian public sphere.

In fact, authors like Calhoun (1992), Fraser (1980) and Mouffe (1999) even state that Habermas was quite idealistic with his concept since in practice the open access was/is/will never be present in it, thus public space was/is/will never be an ideal but an exclusive arena. Consequently, Fraser (1980) argues that instead of speaking about a unified and singular concept of public space, we should turn to a more adequate notion that of the multiple public. This idea of the pluralistic democratic sphere is even more extended in Mouffe's work (1999) who emphasizes the political dimension of public space and its fragmentation into different spaces, audiences and spheres and in which, in opposition to Habermas' "deliberative democratic" (Mouffe 1999) idea, conflict, dissensus, differences of opinion or "agonism", far from the ruin of democratic public sphere, are the conditions of its existence. This means that

> "public space has once more become an urgent topic in the debate on liberal democracy, a debate which ... is increasingly focusing on the relationship between politics and life, in which the political often runs counter to politics itself" (Seijdel 2009).

However, in spite of the undoubted obsolescence of the Habermasian concept, I will not leave this theory out of consideration since the thesis will decide whether the certain projects discussed here are supposing a unitarian or multiple public space, thus analyze how the different models (re)invent, (re)formulate or (re)legitimize their public dimension and involvement. I put forward the hypothesis that public art projects applying the Habermasian idea will rather neutralize the diverse political character of both art and the city, i.e. that they will be

> "couple[d with] ... an aesthetic ideology positing that art … transcend[s] social relations with an urban ideology that presents the spatial organization of cities as a natural product of … evolutions undergone by a supposedly organic society" (Deutsche 1996:13).

On the other hand, it will be possible to describe public art projects applying the Fraserian and Mouffe-ian concepts presumably much more through their critical ideas, through the claim of the right to the city (Lefebvre 1996), which suggests that public sphere is neither natural nor uniformly advantageous, but inseparable from the conflictual and uneven relations that structure specific societies. (Note here that from the standpoint of radical democracy full inclusiveness is not possible also because of the fact that "the dimension of antagonism ... is inherent in all human society" [Mouffe 1999:754]).

Accordingly, in every case it needs to be examined what is public (or not) and why, who the audience is and how project leaders want to relate to them. Do they dare to let them become part of "the political", or do they let them become instruments of market players and party politics?

Towards the Linkage of the Two Fields

Merging the above outlined two perspectives they form a single, interdisciplinary project which explores the "connections among contemporary art, space, and political struggles" (Deutsche 1996:xi), and which became the central focus of Roselyn Deutsche's intellectual undertaking (Evictions, 1996), – ultimately, of this thesis as well. This multifocal field is described by Deutsche through an "urban-aesthetic" or "spatial-cultural" (Deutsche 1996:xi) approach that aims to find answers to the questions of what political issues are at stake in the discourse about art and space, and moreover, what political relationships organize the space of this discourse. The endeavor to map the functioning of this kind of "spatial

politics" (Deutsche 1996:xii) – in the Evictions – is even extended to the examination of the space of politics, which by the end of Deutsche's study comes to be formulated from an unambiguous standpoint.

All the writings in Evictions, discussing urban theory and role of art either from the point of view of Marxian concepts, feminism or radical democratic perspectives, are arguing against a unitarian public space and are stating that public space is rather brought into existence "when the idea that the social is founded on a substantial basis, a positivity, is abandoned" (Deutsche 1996:274). In spite of the fact that Deutsche in her analyses is dealing not exclusively with public art projects, but with artworks (from urban redevelopment projects through urban expressionism to site-specific artworks) inseparable from social and urban structures, her examples are already implying the core of my models, that of the official, personal and commercial perspectives. Accordingly, in the first section (Social Production of Space), while revising the concept stating that neighbourhoods become economic commodities (e.g. transformation of New York's Union Square), she uncovers a conflict between the rhetoric deployed by city officials (about tradition and community) and the actual relations of domination and oppression present. Thus, in her analysis about the relationship between aesthetic ideologies and an oppressive program of urban restructuring she argues against public art which veils these relations by claiming to cater to universal human needs (e.g. Union Square Park) and proposes instead critical alternatives (e.g. Krzysztof Wodiczko's Homeless Projection) which make the notion of "public" problematic and reveal the usually invisible network of ownership and control in cities. By attaching to this claim the second (Men in Space) and third chapter (Public Space and Democracy) discussing sexuality in urban discourses (illuminated with works of art of Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman) and the theory of radical democracy (where she uses the notorious controversy over the removal of

Richard Serra's Tilted Arc) she manages to extend the question to other dimensions as well, – these are all brutal endeavors to conquest diversity.

No wonder, for Deutsche, what marks democracy is the disputatious state, and what makes the art she discusses important is that it acts as the caretaker of this condition. However, during my case studies it will be crucial to ask whether the particular public art projects are supporting conflict or totality, whether they secure the apparent coherence of the new urban sites, or disrupt and critique an existing discourse by generating more discourses, – to discuss the political importance of public art that strengthens or, conversely, contests public space.

Methodology

Concerning the process of the research my starting point was a theoretical hypothesis, an assumption that there are different political positions and roles taken up and maintained by different public art projects. Therefore my endeavor was, first to identify the main categories, and second, to support this idea with practical examples. Accordingly, I came to the conclusion that it is possible to isolate three different models: one on the level of politics, another on the level of personal life, and finally a third one on the level of business, all of which will be illustrated by a case-study as well. As a next step, introducing this typology gave the opportunity to formulate the research problem and concentrate on the question of how these diverse models are functioning.

For the purpose of data collection and analysis I utilized two different types of data. On the one hand, I handled each example (Liberty Statue, Polyphony, CowParade) as primary data, and on the other hand, apart from these visual records, I conducted analysis of (both printed and on-line) materials written about these projects. This secondary data first of all included documents regarding the realization of the works (historical literature, catalogues, internet documentation), however it became complemented by definitions, concepts and research results reported in published summaries. Thus, secondary data will constitute the foundational support of the investigation while primary data will serve for confirming the soundness and legitimacy of applicable theories, and validating certain aspects of theories through my personal experiences of these public art projects.

In this sense, primary and secondary data, direct observation and investigation of materials will complement each other and provide a good basis for understanding the nature and ways of operation of the three models.

Chapter 1. The Official is Political ([Re]Interpretation of a National Monument – Liberty Statue, Budapest)

In this first section I attempt to discuss the Liberty Statue as an ultimate model of how a political power organizes the public space to convey (and thus to teach the public) political lessons. The statue originally was erected in remembrance of the Soviet liberation of Hungary from Nazi forces, however after the regime change, with the entr'acte of the resistance in 1956 against the Soviets and against the symbolic monument as well, an altered composition took shape. Thus, the Liberty Statue represents not just the state-sponsored creations of history, but is an outstanding example of the urban redevelopment projects, and offers the possibility to study the historical, political and cultural transitions of the country, the traces of time embedded in or erased from this place-specific memorial as well. I think the Liberty Statue today is not just a national memorial but a document of urban landscape history and a work of cultural identity that obviously offers the possibility to examine the statue in its relation to history, social memory and urban design. It is with these concerns in mind that I propose to undertake an analysis of the statue in order to read both its earlier and current visual languages.

1.1 The Liberty Statue at the Time of the Soviet Liberation

The understanding of commemorative public art is not possible without recognizing, apart from the physical shape, the political and social importance of the statues. This argument is strongly supported by the fact that the mass appearance of public statues in the second half of the nineteenth century was closely related to the emergence and proliferation of political propaganda, thus the genre – mainly because of its publicness – already at its birth contained the possibility of a close link between power and these kinds of works of art. It is also important to emphasize that in Hungary the second half of the 19th century was the time

of large-scale social rearrangements as well (extension of the suffrage, spreading of the state education, appearance of the mass press), and that the emergence of masses who were ready to intervene in politics forced the state somehow to control these increased intellectual energies. Thus,

> "art placed within those spaces is almost always the product of some instrumental purpose outside the domain of pure aesthetics, and one's analysis (or response) to such art will inevitably be influenced by knowledge about its topical subject and the political resonance that surrounds it" (Levinson 1998:39).

In accordance with these, considering the Liberty Statue, I also aim to concentrate on the certain ways and strategies of how ideological histories are created as a part of the built environment of the monument.

The Liberty Statue, initially Liberation Monument was erected in 1947 on the top of Gellért Hill, however this event was not the very first step in the process of subordinating the place to political intentions. Apart from the fact that the Catholic Church always competed with worldly powers for such locations and lost out to the state in later times, the complex history of the area begins with 1854 when the Habsburgs, after the suppression of the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution and war of independence, built the Citadella, a fortress in order to keep an eye on, and if necessary, to shoot the insurrectionist Pest. Thus, deciding, even if this choice was not by all means conscious from the part of the Soviets (Pótó [2003: 134] conjectures that the Soviets were not aware of this above mentioned fact), to link the Liberty Statue to Citadella was already in itself meaningful, and what is more, threatening in the eyes of the Hungarians. The next factor is added to the compound character of the place after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 when several development plans came to light, mostly in connection with the arrangements of the millennial ceremony: Ödön Széchenyi and Frigyes Feszl both designed a Pantheon- or Walhalla-like building on the Gellért Hill, from

which the latter had conspicuous similarities to the memorial realized on Heroes' Square, and further, Adolf Willheim came out with the idea of a colossal "Hungaria Statue", in whose hands would had been a torch and a Hungarian blazon, – all are suggesting an awakening Hungarian consciousness, a certain attempt of Hungarianization. However, they remained on the level of plans and the building up (further) of the space took place just in the 1940's during the Soviet occupation.

"The political, economic, and military consolidation of East Central Europe by the Soviet Union" – as James (2005:21) argues "was cemented by an aggressive ideological campaign", whose most visible aspect was the massive public display of revolutionary symbols. Thus, monuments, generally as expressions of gratitude to Soviets for liberation from fascism, came to be erected in large-scale production, from which maybe the most prominent was the Liberation Monument. In 1945 the Budapest National Committee announced a competition for this memorial, however, Marshal Voroshilov forestalled the initiative by directly inviting Zsigmond Kisfaludi Strobl to draw up plans, and what is more, after consultation with official Soviet art experts (Gerasimov, Jofan), Voroshilov all alone – again arbitrarily – decided to built the memorial at the highest point of the city. It should be already clear by now, that, although the execution was directed theoretically by the Ministry of Defence and the control of the artistic practice by the Ministry of Culture, moreover the whole project was financed by Hungary, the Soviets were consulted at every stage of the plan, and basically the Soviet authorities were the one who had "the right to the city" (Lefebvre 1996). Finally, the monument (Figure I.) was unveiled in April 1947 and of course could be grasped through a symbolic iconography. Whereas on the base of the monument the figure holding the torch, i.e. the "progressive idea" (Sinkó 1992:83) and the dragon-slayer representing victory over the Devil, i.e. the "primordial force" (Sinkó 1992:83) were intended to embody the virtues of the Soviet soldier who stood above them, on top of an obelisk 22

meters high, the 14 meter tall bronze statue of Liberty held a palm leaf symbolizing the heroicalness and glory of the Soviets. Moreover, despite the towering presence of the figure of liberty, and the fact that it indeed dominated the whole composition, the Hungarian people saw the monument primarily as a symbol of Soviet military rule. This feeling was even strengthened by the inscription ("Erected by the grateful Hungarian Nation in memory of the liberating Russian heroes") upon the memorial whose absurdity is undeniable, especially from the perspective of the Soviet manipulations of the planning processes.

However, exactly this dedication clarifies what kind of tricky interpretation did the Soviets link to the public space as such, and how they exploited this monument in order to "advertise" their entry and liberation (occupation). The promise, that all these happened for a kind of public benefit and on every citizen's behalf, that everyone is alike part of the public realm forces me to think that the Soviets strategically manipulated with the notion of "public sphere" (Habermas 1992). This illusionary adoption and application of the Habermasian ideal arena becomes even fortified with the suggestion that power is "the power of the people" (see Arendt, cited in Lukes 2005:32) and that it equals to the pursuit of collective goals dissociating it from conflicts and interests, from coercions and forces (see Parsons, cited in Lukes 2005:31). Thus, no wonder, while stating that decisions were passed in the name of every citizen, the operation of the Soviet machinery was strongly connected to exclusionary processes, – served mainly and foremost legitimizing purposes.

Consequently, the aim of the Soviets was unambiguous: to create and maintain, after getting rid of the fascist traces, a new ideological history and spread the elements of this history as everyday political symbols. In the case of the Liberation Monument it was true to such an extent that the emblem of the main figure was even appropriated by coins, charters, orders, honors, and by the TV as well, – suggesting that liberation and liberty as such were the crucial points in the present identity of the Hungarian nation. Thus, this state-constructed

identity on the one hand, became planted artificially into people's everyday life and on the other hand, became the core of "the" new collective memory.

> "In the East, the Communists, with their stance of active resistance to fascism, seemed to be a unique position to offer a necessary forgetting, a »new past« as the means to the new future (while keeping alive the stigma of national guilt, the memory of this forgetting)" (Esbenshade 1995:79).

Interestingly, this kind of process of producing meaning through representation has a strong similarity with Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983), i.e. with the notion, which implies that nations are best thought of as "imagined communities". As members of a community, although it is just a utopian one, imagine themselves to be members through being confident that others throughout the nation share similar experiences (read the same newspapers, celebrate the same national holidays, watch the same television programs, share a common culture), so can be understood the functioning of the above mentioned cultural sites where the nation is discursively constructed. However, these national symbols being profoundly rhetorical remained not without comments.

The Liberation Monument as the product and manifestation of the political ideologies of the ruling elite, as the vessel of the state-manipulated cultural identity (more and more) heavily was counteracted. The unsuccessful attempt to fulfil an entire "place attachment" (Hayden 1995:16) culminated during the 1956 revolution, when the crowd pulled down the statue of the Russian soldier calling the legitimacy of this discourse of the power holders in question. However, by 1958 Kisfaludi Strobl restored the statue, thus the elements of the former "ideoscape" (Appadurai 1996) and liberty as the old (new) meaning was (re)assigned again to the Liberation Monument.

In accordance with these, it is unambiguous that public spaces and particularly public statues carry political messages, which are not just „signs to the city", but „signs of the city"

(Ferguson, cited in Palonen 2006) as well. In the case of the Liberation Monument this message was the liberty, however, at the same time it was, especially after the 1956 revolution, undoubtedly nothing more than just a catchword having the meaning of an unwanted external control and oppression.

1.1.1 *An Unofficial Rumour Questioning the Political Territory of the Liberty Statue*

Right after the inauguration of the Liberation Monument tongues started wagging that the figure of the liberty initially was designed as part of István Horthy's (son of Miklós Horthy, the Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary during the interwar years and throughout most of World War II) memorial, and although since then the gossip turned out to be an urban legend, its presence in the structure of the Liberation Monument served as a kind of counter-narrative compared to the state-narrative.

The assumption that Kisfaludi Strobl, instead of erecting the monument of the deputy of the antibolshevist regent, decided to dedicate the main figure finally to the memory of the Bolshevist troops is interesting again from the perspective of how different time ranges are, even if just virtually, embedded in the texture of the memorial. This kind of coincidence of the two very different political systems was of course passionately discussed in the media as well: newspapers from Switzerland to Austria were all dealing with this question (e.g. Neue Züricher Zeitung, Arbeiter Zeitung), memorandums of different Hungarian public figures gave an account of the case shockingly (eg. Dezső Sulyok, Gábor Goda), and after many years of the emergence of the legend the whole topic still seems to be an issue worth to commemorate. From the post 1989 period there are at least two examples, the one is an episode (the 82nd) from the popular television series, called Szomszédok [Neighbours], the other is a scene from Miklós Jancsó's Anyád! A szúnyogok [Damn You! The Mosquitoes] (2000), which are both strengthening the significance of these unofficial memories going back

to the pre 1989 period. Whereas in Szomszédok Uncle Taki's explanation of how the initial plan of designing a propeller (referring to the fact that István Horthy died in an air-crash) was transformed into the new idea of the palm leaf is framed with the acquiescent discourse about "the changing world", in Jancsó's film Kapa and Pepe are more cynical and while wondering what is the Liberty Statue at all, the whole story of the different plans is summarized within the expression of "easy come and easy go".

The fact that the legend was stubbornly present during the four decades and even after the socialist era suggest that no matter how well-known the figure of the woman holding a palm-leaf became, its content was not really warmly welcomed into the public thought. Thus, the acceptance of the legend was equal with finding a kind of loophole to escape from the official „message" mediated by the Liberation Monument.

1.2 The Liberty Statue after the Post-Socialist Liberation

As it should be already clear by now, the territory of the Liberation Monument is first and foremost a historical (political) area marked with the visible or absent traces of the Habsburg orders (see the Citadella), the millennial visions (see the various plans) and Soviet utopias (see the Liberation Monument), the latter intertwined with the suspicion of the presence of the preceding (see the urban legend) and the following (see the damages caused by the 1956 revolution) era as well. Thus, the monument, although being an instrument of single discourses in every period, up to this point could already be understood as a "montage of multiple ... discourses" (Huyssen 1997:58), however its (un)legibility became even more complicated after the regime change when the whole "city-text" (Palonen 2006) became frantically rewritten.

At the same time, the so-called repolitization of the city in 1989 is not a unique situation in the sense that basically it did happen after every major turnover of the power. The

monuments reflected new political realities, as "the Habsburg statues and reliefs were taken down and assigned, almost literally, to what Trotsky unforgettably dismissed as the dustbin of history" (Levinson 1998:9), and the same did occur with statues after the fascism and now, after the communism as well. Sinkó (1992) discusses the history of monuments as such also through political rituals and notes that this history can be described through a cyclic ambition, i.e. through the raising and demolishing of certain monuments (it is interesting to mention that every time the decline of an era was marked with the pulling down of a symbolic monument: in 1919 with the demolition of Millennial Monument's statues of Habsburg rulers, in 1945 with the bringing down of Werbőczy's statue and in 1956 with the destruction of Stalin's statue). No wonder that Wehner (cited in Pótó 2003:23) suggested that the new era should signify its importance and difference from the former eras through giving up the practice of erecting monuments and statues. However, Wehner's conception remained unrealized, and the creation and reconstruction of the new canon has begun.

After the initial euphoria and coming-together of the different forces against past in 1989 – as Palonen (2006) argues – the Hungarian politics and society has turned into camps and conflicts emerged over practicalities of who should and should not be commemorated. Of course the debate about which, if any, of the heroes of the old regime deserve to continue occupying public space was about how to create a new national history, and after all how to construct new identities. Boros (2001:101) argues that there were basically three different positions taken up: those who wanted to get rid of all of the statues, those who did not want to bother them and finally those who wanted to preserve them in a museum of sorts. Finally, in the scope of making ideological distinctions, in Budapest over three hundred streets, squares, and parks were renamed (James 2005:22) and moreover, statues all over the country in a similar magnitude were mutilated, removed or relocated. The undeniable endeavour of getting rid of „the communist vocabulary" (Palonen 2006) of the city could be understood indeed as a

symbol of break with the past, however the question emerges: Is it not the same strategy of selling our public spaces in a Habermasian "package"? Is it not the continuation of the same amnesia as terminal malady characterizing the communist culture (Huyssen 1995:4)? Is it not the same "forced forgetting" (Esbenshade 1995:76) which was the attitude forced on the Hungarians toward fascism? This whole process, through erasing particular figures, suggests that the unpleasant side of the national history is „forgotten", and that these empty spaces were created in order to rewrite the history, or much rather to begin a new history. And indeed, at the same time, the discourse was not just about the problematical status of the old monuments but about repositioning Hungary with the erection of new monuments.

In an interesting manner (or much rather in an absolutely understandable way), apparently the practice of demolishing monuments was equal with the exclusion of certain political, historical and cultural figures, whereas the erection of them meant the inclusion of an other set of figures, however, in fact both served the same purposes, i.e. both were one of the various ways to avoid dealing with the present and construct the past in accordance with contemporary social-political needs. Thus, on the one hand, new memorials were unveiled commemorating the 1956 revolutionary victims, the interwar period and the late nineteenth century – everything but the years after German forces invaded Hungary which became the responsibility of German and then Soviet occupiers and hence not part of the national story[1] –, and, on the other hand, besides several old memorials were brought down, several were put into the newly-established (1993) Statue Park Museum which was just another element within the cultural regulation of collective memory. In accordance with these, rather to accept the argument that the main purpose of its founding was the protection, many state (e.g. Esbenshade 1995, James 2005, Palonen 2006) that the establishment of the Statue Park can be seen as "the spatial and cultural separation of people from their product and from their

[1] Of course the 1956 revolution is an exception to this rule, however, it is not a contradiction in the sense that this period was excluded from the history wrote by the Soviets.

history" (Hayden 1995:42), as the displacement of memory to a field located outside of Budapest. Thus, the communist theme-park houses monuments which were uprooted from their familiar location, from their original ideological context, and were repositioned to a fabricated terrain often described as repository, prison, quarantine (James 2005:23, 32), but as zoo and cemetery (Palonen 2006) as well. The similes are not by accident, all are referring to territories which have strict frontiers, borders to separate post-communist Hungary from the forty-year experience of communism. Thus, the "museum activates a reading of Hungarian identity that is markedly independent of a Russian influence" (James 2005:32), however, "the Other against whom the political identity of Hungarians is being constituted through the museum's rhetoric is their own earlier subordinate selves" (James 2005:33).

Concerning the Liberation Monument, the discussions of course did not leave it untouched either. In 1991 the National Union of Hungarians decided to demolish the whole monument and to replace it with Tibor Szerváciusz' Holy Crown statue, however on the 15th of March demonstrators campaigned for preservation, thus the political decree became the preservation by elimination. In accordance with these, in 1992 on the one hand, the statue of the Soviet soldier was relocated to the suburb, to the Statue Park, and on the other hand, the Soviet star, the reliefs and the inscription were removed, the latter became even replaced with a new "identity card": "To the memory of all of those who sacrificed their lives for the independence, freedom, and success of Hungary".

Thus, the Liberation Monument, henceforth Liberty Statue (Figure II.) functioned onward as a national memorial, although the new (political, thus ideological) context gave a twist to the substance of this commemoration. The fact that the reshaped Liberty Statue on the one hand, represents the ideals of the victors but on the other hand, still stands as a vestige of what is now absent, seems to suggest that the Statue remains forever under the state of erasure, "neither truly there nor fully absent" (Esbenshade 1995:73).

1.2.1 *Alternative Initiatives Problematizing the Rewritten Political Territory of the Liberty Statue*

This above mentioned "half present, half absent situation" also manifests itself in Tamás Szentjóby's public art project (Figure III.) when he shrouded the central figure for a couple of days under a white sheet from which he even cut out two huge eye-orifices. Although, the transformation of the statue to a ghost, to the "Spirit of Liberty Statue" can be understood of course as an ironical act reflecting to the decision of the National Union (to the preservation by elimination), and in general to the dilemmas what to do with the Soviet monuments (should they be demolished, preserved or hidden?), the whole idea and the process of the execution of this idea enables a much wider range of possible interpretations.

Interestingly, the press gave the information well in advance that in June 1992 the Liberty Statue will be covered for three days (during the time of the celebration of the marching out of the Soviets), however, they strongly (over)emphasized the fact that the whole project is not about a political but an artistic intervention. This sharp distancing from the field of the politics already implies how unstable the situation of that time was, and how carefully the politics as an expression was handled. Besides the cautious formulations, of course there were several who completely objected to the realization of the plan: the competent authority of the local government declared that "the idea is in an artistic sense quite unoriginal", and that "the covering of the statue will encourage others to vandalize in the same manner the monuments throughout the city" (cited in Boros 2001:86). The spokesman finally got to the point that the whole action would give the impression that the figure of the liberty is the ghost of the past years, of the communism, however the signs of the occupation were already removed, thus the statue meanwhile became "cleaned" (cited in Boros 2001:86). This self-deception is striking and even telling in the sense that it shows how considerable proportions have the maniac "forgetting" grown to.

Finally the experiment became realized, and, while also etherealizing the memories embedded in the memorial, it much rather radically grasped the "ghost" of the opportunity and the place, – daringly integrated and even exceeded the complex history of the area. This practice of forcing a monument to testify to certain socio-political conflicts that it was being employed to conceal easily can be fitted in an international tendency (e.g. Krzysztof Wodicko's Homeless Projection which transformed the "gentrified statues" [Deutsche 1996:xv] into homeless people, thus appropriated the sculptures to create a counter-image of redevelopment), in an again and again appearing "attempt to create a democratic public space in the public space of the redeveloped city" (Deutsche 1996:xv). Thus, Szentjóby's own narrative of the memorial is brilliant exactly because it endeavored to manifest the immaterial essence of the spirit of the place – ad absurdum – in a materialized way.

However, to illustrate the still unclarified status of the Liberty Statue, let me call the attention to a recent news which runs the followings: Imre Makovecz, once respected architect, can hardly wait to the moment when politicians will finally come to their mind and will replace "the ugliness" (Index 2008) of the whole area with some other monuments more worthy which he of course already managed to design. For Makovecz the presence of the previous era is still so bothering in the structure of the Liberty Statue, that he recommends to return to the tradition of the planning of Pantheon-like buildings, thus to the idea of create a surface for the commemoration of the Hungarian Great Men.

In order to avoid such nonsensical statements, the memory (of the Liberty Statue), I think, should, instead of erasing, repressing, uprooting, detaching from life, packaging and even commercializing, i.e. selling, "whether for hard cash or political points" (Esbenshade 1995:85), be integrated and introduced by the authorities into the public discourse and open them to multiple stories, including some of those ruptured during history.

Chapter 2. The Personal is Political (Analysis of a Public Art Festival – Polyphony, Budapest)

The aim of this second section can be grasped in the endeavor of offering a model in which public art as such is no more about declarations but multiple statements, even multiple questions. This kind of diversity of the Polyphony will be articulated on the one hand by the fact that works of art were placed as site-specific works throughout Budapest stressing the different "scapes" (Appadurai 1996) of one and the same city, and on the other hand, that these pieces embodied a real polyphony in its literal meaning, – stood there as manifestations of different voices. Accordingly, the title of this subchapter is referring intentionally to the slogan (Lacy 1995:29) of the feminist art movement which suggests that private voices (issues) can and in this particular case have to belong to public matters. However, interestingly, although Polyphony indeed signifies a new type of understanding of correlations between public dimensions and art, the idea of its organization emerged in a context where the previous era, or much rather its ideological creed was considerably present, in a sense still part of this new epoch. Thus, Polyphony realized in 1993, four years after the regime change represents not just the characteristics of a (more) novel type of public art but gives the opportunity to study its direct relation to the model introduced formerly.

2.1. From Monophony to Polyphony (Diversity and Difference in the City)

Polyphony – or as its subtitle formulates, the Social Commentary in Contemporary Hungarian Art – becomes profoundly interpretable and completely understandable only if we take into account the dilemmas surrounding its execution from the very first moment. The problems started already during the preparation processes when it came to light that the project, guided by Suzanne Mészöly, and based on the ideas of the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts Budapest, intends to excite the emergence of a new form of public art: the

undertaking of a kind of social commitment and the production of issue-based works. No wonder, this trial of a more or less forced (artificially generated) change remained not without comments, – in an absurd manner even because the apparent similarity of its content with the propagandistic overtones of the previous epoch.

According to the initial plan, the exhibition, originally titled as Nyilván (Obviously Public), would have taken place in Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle Budapest), however, the director of that time (Katalin Keserü) after reading the basic concepts plainly refused to present the event in the gallery. As an explanation she said that "art engaged with any form of politics is not art" (cited in Mészöly 1993:14) which declaration nicely shows how the word "politics" (even political) became discredited during the Soviet occupation and how it turned to be enemized after the regime change. Thus, presumably, Keserü's answer concerned not so much this particular conception of Polyphony but rather the ideas and ideological thoughts of the previous era, i.e. the socialist experience that art obviously has to mirror social relations. And indeed, many (among them experts) were convinced of the fact that within democratic circumstances taking a stand on social issues does not belong to the task of art.

Although the expulsion from the space of the museum compelled the organizers to re-release the exhibition advertisement and, adjusting to the new situation, to invite artists to propose works for any public or private space, the range of social and political themes remained the same. The possible issues to be worked up were determined in

> "the transformations of power; ... the revaluation of social roles, expectations, customs and systems of values; the tensions of collective belonging and dispersal; orientation in the new objective, ideological, emotional and temporal environment; transformations of sexual and gender relations; a mapping of geographical, social and institutional spaces (for movement); the adequacy or inadequacy of the cultural linguistic and symbolic means available in this changed reality; a sense of responsibility for human and environmental resources; the problems of processing a

> private and shared past, present and future; and the social and public role of fine arts in answering challenges like the above" (Mészöly 1993:18),

– topics that imply unambiguous resolutions. And indeed, the wording of this application includes the endeavour of realizing a series of up-to-date events, which, on the one hand, will parallel and naturalize the current phenomena in international art, that of the focus on social, i.e. on political problems (e.g. Whitney Museum of American Art's 1993 Biennial Exhibition, Creative Time's 42nd street Project, 1993), and which, on the other hand, will cause a structural shift in Hungary, within and outside the artistic field as well. This dual aim nicely explains yet at the same time – with a close reading – dissolves and cancels the reasons why its judgement happen to be so unenthusiastic. In the years directly after the regime change it was probably quite easy to educe from this document that the political attitude of the whole festival equals with the governmental and "party-and-state" meaning of the word, however it is clear that instead of insisting on this very restricted denotation of politics, Polyphony much rather wanted to confront it in a wider sense, – to reconsider and clean it from negative connotations.

This endeavour to part from the cultural policy of the communist era is even supported and strengthened by the fact that works of art of Polyphony were put in such situations where at first sight they appeared not as art but as primary communications, messages and conditions. From this perspective, Polyphony was not just simply about the process of moving away from the traditional environment of exhibition halls where works are necessarily viewed in the context of other works, that is, in the context of art, but about the intention that, in opposition to the prominent and imperceptible status of the Liberty Statue, here the public was expected to confront, stumble over, and meet accidentally with under-identified works. Accordingly, it was an essential feature of Polyphony lasting approximately one month that the site-specific works were barely promoted (upcoming events were advertised only in a

small format with a characteristic meander frame in the most widely read daily newspaper), – that "the function of the Art Event, the Artist as Elite, and the Art Viewer as Privileged" (Mészöly 1993:15) basically became nullified.

Thus, no wonder the public could meet with Polyphony at the most unexpected moments throughout the whole city:

> "in opening a newspaper, a magazine, riding a bus, driving a car across a bridge, using a public telephone booth, receiving an officially stamped envelope, shopping at a greengrocer, walking on the street, looking at an electronic billboard, or visiting a bomb shelter, an empty block of land, the bank of the Danube, institutes of learning, an artist's flat, a business center, a museum, and a private gallery" (Mészöly 1993:15).

However, this kind of deprivation of the privilege of being informed was not an attempt against knowledge, on the contrary, it allowed to put into operation a wide variety of interpretational possibilities and to transfer the process of developing knowledge to the public. Consequently, Polyphony, instead of creating statements in advance, emphasized the power of information-access and -usage through raising questions and dilemmas whose answering became the duty of the public. One symbolic illustration for this situation could be when a Hungarian radio station requested the callers to identify the company, and what it was advertising, in response to the text placed by Antal Lakner on the two pylons of the Elizabeth Bridge: Over Here – Over There (Figure IV).

At the same time, this example adequately clarifies how multiple aspects were on the one hand, present during, and on the other hand, strongly part of the whole festival. The social issues that has been raised in Polyphony (see e.g. János Sugár's electronic billboard: "Work for nothing or at least do works that you would do anyway for nothing." referring to the budding capitalism) stand there as multiple voices and proclaimed that, based on Fraser (1980) and Mouffe (1999), multiple opinions, i.e. diversity are indeed the condition of the

existence of public space. Moreover, by redefining public art, they allowed to see the project as not the continuation of official art, but as art that changed the role of public buildings and public spaces, freeing them metaphorically from state control and giving them back to the society.

2.2 The Publicity of Privacy

In order to shed light on the connections between public and private entities, first it needs to be examined how, i.e. in what respect and to what extent the realization of Polyphony (the initiative of a private sector [curators]) became dependent on the decisions of administrators and officers (public sector). The privilege of the state, as it should be clear by now, is nothing new concerning the erection and placement of any public art project in the city, however, the question in the case of Polyphony is rather how the organizers dealt with the situation of this subjection. Interestingly, their strategy, in spite of their actual defenselessness against the higher authorities, was not simply to acquiesce in the assigned positions, but to adopt and transform this power into an artistic gesture, into another "social commentary in contemporary Hungarian art". No wonder, in accordance with these, the accounts, procedures, and administrations, leading to the development or rejection of the projects have become, on the one hand, documented and, on the other hand, integral parts of each work, – caused the impression that Polyphony was organized by a vast number of founders and organizers, where secretaries in government offices, managers of particular public spaces played the role of the curator in their negative or positive actions.

Another approach to this relationship could be to study how the norms of conduct in public life came to be, historically, first sharply separated from then connected again to the conduct in the private domain. Throughout Europe, thus in Hungary as well, in the

nineteenth century the link between modes of private and public life turned to be articulated in the underlying difference of activities which meant that

> "[whereas] in public one observed, one expressed, in terms of what one wanted to buy, to think, to approve of, not as a result of continuous interaction, but after a period of passive, silent, focused attention, ... private meant a world where one could express oneself directly as one was touched by another person; private meant a world where interaction reigned, but it must be secret" (Sennett 1977:148).

And indeed, as Gyáni (1994) notes, the emergence of these different codes of social behavior was so dominant that they became even attached to class and gender identities. However, while there really used to be a possibility of a private/public double life, by today a further structural transformation of public space has taken place, which – in this case – was accompanied by a shift from a detached interaction to a more intimate and even obscene form of communication. This kind of convergence of public and private life of course became the object of several studies, however there were just a few whose interpretation was not built around the observation of an increasing degradation regarding the public space. Accordingly, Habermas (1992) argued that this convergence causes the end of the public sphere, Sennett (1978) emphasized the growing phenomenon of narcissism, Žižek (2001) discussed how self-expression leads in fact to self-repression, and Baudrillard (1990) introduced the notion of ob-scene instead of society, – more or less they all pointed out the fact that only the omission of intimacy would make it possible to create the proper public role of an individual.

In contrast to these pessimistic analyses, Sloterdijk's work (2006) gives an affirmative example how it is possible to (re)define intimacy as a factor which is constitutive in itself. Since "our habitat, from television to Web 2.0, is constantly endangered by tsunamis of emotions, cynicism, contempt, hysteria and delusions of participation" (van Tuinen 2009),

Sloterdijk is not hesitating to admit that in the mass-media society, the public (atmo)sphere may be the most threatened, however – he adds – it is a new vector of power as well. In this novel situation, he is convinced of the fact, that mentally and socially ecological consciousness faces the task of making the intimate public, of course without lapsing into an obscenity which is many times the media's own strategy. Therefore, Sloterdijk calls for a kind of symbiosis, where ecology and bio-politics should converge in a reflective intercourse with the intimate, – in psycho-politics, as it is called in Anger and Time (2006).

This psycho-politics – in a sense of a symbolic form in which sociality equals with the intimate forms of togetherness – was not a negligible aspect in the Polyphony either. Works concealed within the city text could indeed be understood as intimate confessions, however, exactly because of their publicity they became part of a public "heritage", – the very personal voices united into the voices of the society. Offering confidential messages (e.g. János Sugár's revelations [What's happened? The machine writes out my thoughts!] transmitted in the Blaha Square; Pál Gerber's declaration [My day is ruined if I don't vanquish three evils.] fixed on the bus number 4), individual calls (e.g. István Szili's proposed instalment when the voice of the user of the public phone could have been possible to hear outside of the phone booth too), human bodies (e.g. Béla Máriás stood at the square of Hungary's zero-stone, in the starting point of the society alone, with his own system of values, making public the whole of his social reality) in the service of the society, or even making available a private property (e.g. Balázs Kicsiny exhibited a common tin boat covered with comics in his own living room) for everyone – were all projects (Figures V-VIII.) that on the one hand, intended to call in question the belief in the benefit of total privacy and the necessity to be afraid of the controlling power of publicity, and on the other hand, raised awareness in the user concerning the contrast and connection between public and private discourses, areas, spaces.

No wonder, this experimentation with new potential connections and new social syntheses transformed art into a relay within the intimate communication networks and created a new type of audience. Thus, not just responses by the bureaucrats in government offices issuing permissions became fundamental to the concept of societal manifestations, but also the cab drivers' who were passing the electronic billboard asking them "...would you work for nothing?", the commuters' on the bus and in general the city-users all contributed to the tingeing of these public comments. Accordingly, the audience took part and became a part of these works of art, an art which is no more militarising, but socializing.

Chapter 3. The Commercial is Political (The Phenomenon of a Themed Public Art Project – CowParade, Worldwide)

This chapter intends to explore how a business initiative spectacularizes the urban space through creating and scattering an icon, the cow. Although the CowParade, once a local occurrence, by today a franchise system, defines itself as "the largest and most successful public art event in the world" (http://www.cowparade.com/inc/aboutus.php), its field of activity is not confined to an artistic level, – the embellished cows immediately begin to operate within a certain socio-political fabric until they are sold or auctioned. However, this seemingly final act signals not the decease of the cows, rather the beginning of their iterative calving: the myth of the sacred animal is narrated (promoted) again and again throughout the whole globe until the familiar/exotic item slowly becomes to dominate our geographical imagination. Thus, CowParade puts into operation a complex economic system which means that the understanding of the project is not possible without analyzing its connection to the general phenomenon of taking (in this case temporary) possession (privatization?) and commercialization of public spaces by the private (business) sector, to internationalization processes**,** and to the emergence of a new type of urban politics supporting the conversion of urban sites into urban entertainment destinations.

3.1. The CowParade as a Brand

The idea of CowParade goes back to the year of 1996, when Walter Knapp, a Swiss window-dresser, drawing inspiration from a former exhibition where painted lions (symbol of Zurich) were displayed throughout Zurich, asked his son, Pascal Knapp to design a life-size cow. The possible reasons lying behind his choice, i.e. why especially a cow, are not known, however the rising popularity and fame of the animal undeniable demands some explanations. Most of the interpretational attempts (e.g. the official web page of CowParade) are

approaching the question from a historical point of view, namely from the cow's symbolic status cultivated and maintained basically by every culture. They are emphasizing the importance of the experience and knowledge shared by everyone concerning the animal: its well-known spiritual and religious connotations, but its role in our everyday-life as well. In addition to it, I consider the fact very interesting, even metaphoric that the cow represents our connection to the land as well (Szemadám 1990:216), which function through this public art event becomes transformed into the representation of public space.

Another logical clarification of this riddle could be to take into consideration the practical side of the decision, i.e. the advantageous form of a cow. This assumption is even strengthened by the mode of the execution, namely that, although Knapp's completed prototype (a standing cow with its head up) retained the sense of the cow appearance, it became significantly deviated from the actual cow anatomy in order to produce surfaces, angles and curves, which served to challenge and inspire the artists. Thus, the proposed Zurich art exhibition intended to offer not just a common semantic adventure, but a possibility to exploit the artificial body of a cow and to use it as a unique, three dimensional canvas. The concept was so well received that the Zurich Retailers Association agreed to sponsor the event, and they almost immediately approved the production of the mold from which later the 800 fiberglass copies of the clay model were made. Willy-nilly, the "Zürcher Kuh-Kultur" (Zurich Cow-Culture) already at the beginning of its history became characterizable by the alliance between the artistic and commercial sector. (Of course it should be added that the interweaving of these two sectors by today became a general symptom, however, the present situation clearly gives a new twist to this relationship. Whereas in other cases, a work of art is the one that builds a market around itself, here, as I will show, the market will create the "work of art".)

In spite of the enthusiasm surrounding the arrangements, the project staged in Zurich, originally called “Land in Sicht - auf nach Zürich” (Land Ahoy – off to Zurich), surprisingly, did not really take-off until businessman Peter Hanig and Lois Weisberg (the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs) bought the concept to Chicago the following year, in 1999. Because of the expansionary plans, Knapp improved his design even further and managed to create two more models, that of the reclining and grazing cows, which complemented the initial cow sculpture. (According to some sources [e.g. Kamath 2007], Knapp is working presently on a “top-secret”, fourth cow sculpture which will be displayed in future CowParade happenings.) Meanwhile the Swiss recognized the PR-potential lying in the project, and the CowHolding Parade AG, founded in 1999, started to marketize the idea internationally. (It is quite telling regarding the project’s involvement in, if not subordination of the business sphere that an American rivaling company, called CowHolding Parade, became set up as well, however the Swiss immediately sued and made convict them.) As a consequence, in accordance with the judgment of the court, now the Swiss corporation is the one who has right not just to a city (Lefebvre 1996), but to all cities planning to reproduce the cows, – each place is obliged to buy the Zurich license, and to follow its regulations from the beginning to the end. The fact, that by today CowParade events have been organized in over 50 cities worldwide, and that the show still seems to be inexhaustible, definitely suggests, that CowParade as such came to be understood as a franchised art commodity, as an event copyrighting a brand.

The cow, just like any other brand image (e.g. the crocodile of Lacoste, the puma of Puma), immediately began to participate in an international communication system where the created image (cow), as a part intends to mark the brand name (CowParade), as a whole. The status of this branding strategy differs from the traditional practice only in the sense that whereas in other cases the commodity generally is a third entity (e.g. brand: Lacoste, brand image: crocodile, product: shirt) here the manufactured good equals with the cow as well

(brand: CowParade, brand image: cow, product: cow). At the same time, concerning the relationship of the brand image and the product, it should be noticed as well, that

> "over the past decade and a half, logos have grown so dominant that they have essentially transformed the clothing on which they appear into empty carriers for the brands they represent. The metaphorical alligator, in other words, has risen up and swallowed the literal shirt" (Klein 2000:48),

– which in our case would mean that the cow has eaten itself. Of course, this statement is referring not just to a biological nonsense, but to the tendency that companies nowadays produce not so much commodities as fictitious ideas and standpoints, i.e. the brand is presented not in the form of a material outcome, but as an attitude, as a position taken up.

Accordingly, CowParade has come to do more than establish simple associations with its particular product, the cow, – it rather carries messages about ways of life and the values allied with it. This transcended relationship is nicely indicated by the official slogan "Art Another Manner For Everyone" (Császi and Gluck 2007) which shows on the one hand, how branding uses imagery to equate products with positive cultural and social experiences, and on the other hand, how advertisement seeks to take these linkages out of the representational realm and make them a lived "reality". The self-definition of the CowParade unambiguously states that the brand offers the possibility to enjoy a kind of work of art, which does not demand previous or professional knowledge, which is able to reconcile the claims to diversity with a homogenizing influence, and thus which is accessible for every citizen. (This seemingly liberal (re)interpretation of the cultural publicity becomes completed with the special aims of selling the cows at different auctions for the benefit of non-profit organizations, however this point will be elaborated more deeply in the next subchapter.) Thus, proclaiming the connection between every person, every place, and every idea causes not just the evocation of the Habermasian public sphere as ideal arena (Habermas 1992) but

also the extension of it to global dimensions, suggesting that the CowParade as a brand is the expression of the global city (Sassen 1991), the allegory of the global public space. The existence of this global publicity becomes even more strengthened through the generally established custom of branding, that of circulating names of internationally well-known stars (e.g. Michael Jordan and Nike), which is the case with the CowParade as well (e.g. Oliviero Toscani, Norman Foster, Radiohead, David Lynch, Václav Havel). Whether celebrities are lending their names to the brand, or it is the brand that is helping to build the name and the image of them, is still a question, however, the union implies that brands and stars have become to function in a same way, – in our case study both are belonging to the mechanism of commercialization and spectacularization of towns or particular areas.

Another interesting concomitant phenomenon of the CowParade is a certain imitational trend, which, without any significance diversion, but with the elusion of the law, several times tried to localize the global event.

> "150 buffalo roamed — where else? — in Buffalo. And moose were loose right ... in Toronto. In Seattle, Cincinnati, and Peoria, it was hog heaven. Trotting alongside was Lexington, which kept pace with 80 life-sized horses. In Belfast, Maine, bears will come out of hibernation for their third year in a row. Not quite a pestilence, a plague of frogs hopped into Toledo, while dolphins, sharks, fish, and lizards made their habitat on land for several months out of the past few years. Humanizing the project, St. Louis peppered their public spaces with people and, soon, Cleveland is in tune with Fender Stratocaster electric guitars" (Decker 2002:119),

or just to give some current and local examples: the Homeless Elephants in the Pest side, and Zebras in the Buda side. However, although these counter-organizations were regarded more or less successful on the micro-level, they did not manage to repeat the triumph of the CowParade, – as neither could the different fake-brands (see e.g. Adidas – Adios, Puma – Plima) exceed the boundaries of the Chinese market.

In this context it is not surprising that during the last ten years the position of the cow has undergone radical changes: it started out as an object with some use-value, later turned into a fetishized symbol that invaded public spaces, and presently became linked with a brand identity that enabled to take over, even "colonialize" much of the cultural and public life, to put into operation a complex industry which included the celebration of public art, the reflection to the spirit of distinct cultural heritages, and the aid of people with chronic diseases.

3.2. The Functioning of this Global Entertainment, Tourism and Charity Industry

In contrast to the complicated and diverse mechanisms evoked by the event, the starting point, which is the task of filling in a simple form available on the official website of CowParade (www.cowparade.com), gives the (distorted) impression how easy it is to turn on and make run the whole machinery, – another business strategy surrounding the project. After getting past the formal requirements, the company willing to organize the public art show pays the license to the CowHolding Parade AG, who in return provides the necessary information and rules about the production of the cows. Hence the Swiss corporation's scope of duties becomes rather limited, the responsibility of the realization of the general script is shifted on the local company. At the same time, it is not enough solely to insert the event into the city in point, it should be – with the help of a high-level professional input – adopted to the local circumstances as well (a good illustration for the indispensable presence of this expertness is the Hungarian case where the project – because of the lack of a professional background – failed to become carried out in two consecutive years, in 2002 and in 2003 [N.d., 2006.]).

As a next step, the company begins to prepare the field for the artistic reinterpretation: the prospective participators are notified through an "Open (sic!) Call to Artists" process,

which consists of targeted mailing to top artists, newspapers, television ads, internet forums and of cooperation with local art organizations, – of exploiting the dispersive effects of media and other networks. Thus, on the one hand, the event is advertised in a sensational way suggesting that cows theoretically can be painted by everyone (by amateurs, unknowns and professionals as well), which aim on the other hand basically never comes to be fulfilled since every animal exhibited needs to have an own sponsor (sponsorship should mean at least $7,500) limiting the possibilities to a great extent. Consequently, it may happen (as in Hungary) that winning design plans become rejected because of their non-sponsored status.

At this point, since the legal situation is still the same as we have seen elsewhere, the privileged position of the state have to be emphasized once again: namely, placing out the cows on public spaces is not possible neither without the assistance nor without the approval of the local government. Thus, here we are facing another formation of linkage between public (government leaders rather than community) and private (businessmen rather than private citizen) sectors, however, in contrast to Polifónia, this connection, in spite of the undeniable need of the company for it, is not a one-sided usufruct, but favors both contracting parties. In fact, it becomes understandable through taking into account its advantages regarding the other side. It is not by accident that mayors from Chicago to Budapest are all supporting the event, and although their opening speech[2] is masked with the estimation of the artistic and entertaining value of the event, they are far from the generous attitude of figures like Maecenas or the Medicis, – their one and only reason lying behind the cooperation is a certain economic consideration. This ulterior motive becomes not surprising at all if we begin to familiarize with the fact that e.g. in Chicago the CowParade has produced $200,000,000

[2] See the address given by the mayor in Chicago: "Art is about breaking down barriers. It gets people to feel, to think, to react. So when you come across life-sized cow sculptures that have been covered in gumdrops, Cows that have been painted with elaborate themes or transformed into something else entirely, you can't help but stop and think about what it means. All your preconceived ideas go out of the window. Suddenly people see that art can be fun and that art can be interesting to everyone, not just people who frequent museums" [Kamath 2007].

income from the tourism industry. The faith in tourism, in the main embodiment of this above mentioned pro, indeed counted as one of the main driving forces in accepting the alliance.

Traveling as a special form of the regional and national export has a long-standing history, yet the present epoch became radically differing from the previous periods:

> "modern tourism is no longer centered on the historic monument, concert hall, or museum but on the urban scene ... , more precisely, on some version of the urban scene fit for tourism" (Sassen and Roost 1999:143).

In accordance with these, places nowadays are not just constituting the essence of the tourist experience but started to function as the basic products of this industry: marking a place with an information or represent it in an eloquent way turned to be a generally established custom causing the transformation of any site into a sight (Britton cited in Fainstein and Judd 1999a:4). The markers, newly constructed, are adopted to the regularly image advertising practice of the city, to a development that hardly can escape any traveler who opens a magazine, a newspaper, or a website. Interestingly, this kind of selling strategy nicely corresponds to the traditional understanding of commodification, however, whereas

> "commodification is the process by which objects and activities come to be evaluated primarily of their exchange value in the context of trade, in addition to any use-value that such commodities might have ... [,] when one conceptualizes tourism as commodity, this meaning has to be extended to include at least one other value as well: sign-value" (Watson and Kopachevsky 1994:646-647).

Thus, no wonder, the utilization of the public space through the artistic cows as sign-values seemed a proper and profitable plan in the eyes of the city-leaderships as well.

Consequently, the display of the manifestations of this business-based undertaking throughout the city, their temporary implantation to the city-text (Palonen 2002) turned the

cows into another example among the (a)historical attractions visited by a broad spectrum of people. The cows enshrined particular places as sacred objects, functioned as magnets for urban tourism, – they perfectly served the expectations of the tourist gaze (Urry 1999). This spectacularization is even extended to another sphere: the visual consumption is followed by the process of rounding up, refurbishing and selling of the cows at auctions, where the place of the auction (premier auction houses such as Christie's, Sotheby's and Phillips Auctioneers have all cooperated), the sum of the highest winning bid and the total amount of benefits (the average bid price on one cow is nearly $25,000, the highest bid in the history of the CowParade was $146,000, whereas an auction can raise even an impressive $3,000,000 benefit) are all added as factors and facts to the industry's profile in order to fascinate, amaze, but first of all to propagandize. Thus, the spectacularized project concludes with a spectacularized gesture.

However, it should be noticed as well at what cost is this industry developed and flourished. The continued privileging of sight, even if we disregard the fact that the spreaded cows reduce the cities where they occur to a global map of tourist attractions, produces more serious, even "dark and destructive consequences" (Urry 1999:77). Urry (1999) confronts the theory of the "society of spectacle" (Guy Debord 1995) mainly and foremost with Foucault's notion of power, maintaining that "our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance. ... We are neither in the amphitheater, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine" (Foucault cited in Urry 1999:77). And indeed, the public art project discussed here is always accompanied by a coordinating agency that oversees and protects the works once they are put in the public realm. This network of control is more than what has ever been waged for traditional public sculptures.

3.3. A "Glocal" Example: Budapest Cow Parade

Although the appearance of tourism carried the promise of experiencing something different, cities that are remade to catch the attention of tourists seem more and more alike (Fainstein and Judd 1999a:12). This is especially true in a case like the global phenomenon of the CowParade where the brand of the standardized cows is applied according to the same prescriptions and rules in every city. However,

> "tourist locales are occupied by real people leading their daily lives. As such, they retain a subjectivity that cannot be reduced, in the end, only to objects of the tourist gaze or products of the tourist industry. As a consequence of the intermixture of the global and the local, any attempt to capture the essence of urban tourism is difficult" (Fainstein and Judd 1999a:16).

In order to tinge the picture, this subchapter is intended to give a concrete example, the Budapest CowParade which on the one hand will stand here as the representation of all of these events, and on the other hand as an individual occasion providing the opportunity to outline some similarities forced out by the system and diversities allowed by the same structure.

The Budapest CowParade became realized after two unsuccessful trials in 2006 by the joint operation of MUÚ Art Ltd. and FOCUS Brand Activation Company, which together took the responsibility of accomplishing, securing and carrying through the whole procedure of the public art show. Regarding the final placement of the cows it was quite conspicuous that they were scrupulously herded within the city center and cautiously disconnected from the less attractive and controversial parts of Budapest. The concentration of the animals at sides (sights) of interchanges or other busy destinations definitely suggested that a well-defined perimeter separated the tourist space from the rest of the city where crime, poverty, and urban decay might appear. Thus, only the non-ashamed sites (sights) came to be

interpreted as the public parts of the town, leaving visitors shielded from and unaware of another definition of the cityscape. Taking into consideration Urry's argument i.e. the existence of tourist "bubbles" (cited in Judd 1999:36), it will be unambiguously clear that these areas indeed constituted a certain (cow-)"bubble" which "enveloped the traveler so that he/she only moves inside secured, protected and normalized environments" (Bottoms and Wiles cited in Judd 1999:36).

Besides the presence of control in this sense of "bubbles" (cited in Judd 1999:36), it is interesting to note how these Budapest "bubbles" started virtually to communicate with other bubbles manufactured worldwide. That is to say that tourist "bubbles" look like so standardized that they nearly give the impression of being mass-produced in a tourism infrastructure factory. Thus, willy-nilly the created sights came to encourage dialogue and connections among people from different milieus, forging a "real" sense of a community. In this respect, the tourist wave evoked by the Budapest CowParade contributed (as well) to the formation of a global, and what is more, of a "supranational" (Fainstein and Judd 1999b:268) culture.

At the same time, while the form of the cow sculptures and the aura surrounding them remained the same, the city's artists were challenged by the past and current (art)historical events, inspired by the cultural influences of their respective home, and moved by their own interpretation of the cow as an (art) object. In accordance with these, no wonder, in Budapest using the global, but distancing aspects of the festival the works of art filliped the emblematical experiences of the contemporary Hungarian society: we could meet cows (Figures IX-XII.) referring e.g. to the actual political situation (Fűrészes tehén [Saw-Cow]), to a periodical having unambiguous political standpoint which itself got its name from a Hungarian cult-film called Witness, but which can quite simple just (re)call some agricultural associations (Magyar Narancs [Hungarian Orange]), to a recent blockbuster film (Magyar

Vándor [Hungarian Vagabond]) and to some Hungaricums like Rubik's cube (Rubicow) and Goulash-soup (Goulash-soup). Thus, "despite the rise of mass tourism and the globalization of the tourism industry, local characteristics do persist" (Fainstein and Judd 1999a:16), – it is not by accident that Császi and Gluck (2007) are talking about "glocal" features. .

Interestingly, the public reactions to this themed public art project included such a wide variety of opinions that basically they ranged from adoration to detestation. One element worth to study concerning the judgment of the whole show is how, in spite of advertising the production as something which allows the visitor to be both participant and voyeur, engaged and critical, the event at some points revealed itself. Although the Budapest CowParade was surrounded also with some scandals (a cow called Blue Melting Ice Cream [Figure XIII.] in the form of a melting ice cream, complete with a stick emerging from its posterior, caused a storm when it was erected in front of St. István's Basilica), it became sticked within the local political skirmishes (the sculpture had been placed in front of the Basilica on 1 July 2006 but was moved to the Liberal headquarters a few days later by a group calling itself Deminem, who argued that the cow's location was derogatory and the fact that its back was pointing towards the Basilica is obviously against the Catholic Church), which illustrates the essence of these anti-movements not in the most appropriate way. However, in other cases, it is indeed quite telling how the leadership reacted to (or much rather ignored) the phenomenon of anti-corporate activism, some of which turned the power of brand names and images against itself. Let me clarify my point with a Swedish case, when The Militant Graffiti Artists of Stockholm had kidnapped and imprisoned one of the cows of the Stockholm event in protest to the publicly provisioned animals carrying advertisements (Figure XIV.). Their performance – similarly to other demonstrations of this type (e.g. "Reclaim the street") – tried to call our attention to the tendency that statutes basically formed an airtight protective seal around the brand, "allowing it to brand us, but prohibiting us from so much as scuffing it" (Klein

2000:188). However, ridiculing and disparaging the brand of the CowParade served not solely the purpose to state that the cows as instruments of various business interests are nothing more than "idiotic little scribblings" (Banksy 2002:N.d.) on the city-text, but further, this gesture tried to maintain the autonomy of, consequently to save and clean art from these compromising circumstances as well.

In spite of the undoubtedly ironic action of The Militant Graffiti Artists, the symbolic imitation of a terrorist attack considerably emphasized the seriousness and immenseness of the situation. However, in order to escape from the trap, they even tried to offer an agreement: the Swede demanded in a video cassette[3] sent to the paper that cows which have been on display must "declared non-art, otherwise hostages will be sacrificed" (http://www.artliberated.org/?p=cases&id=27). As a last message, because of the negligence of the threat and the indifference of the political sector, the project culminated in the radical but spectacular rejection of the corporate rule dominating our streets, in the liberation of the commoditified urban culture, in cutting off the labels of the city-textile(cloth): in the public decapitation of the cow.

[3] See their manifesto: "We, the members of The Militant Graffiti Artists of Stockholm feel morally obligated to protect our city against the Cows that have invaded our streets. The cows are Not Art. That these cows are presented as Public Art is the biggest fraud. Advertisements can never be art. Freedom of Expression doesn't belong to the average person anymore, only to those who have the money to buy a billboard or in this case, a cow that serves the same purpose as a billboard. We believe Freedom of Expression is threatened. Challenging the legitimacy of the cows in order to defend Freedom of Expression is the duty of every citizen. We have taken a hostage. We demand that the cows be declared Non-Art and that all the cows, before 12:00 August 23rd, leave our streets. We also demand walls where we Stockholmers can paint and practice our freedom of expression. If our demands are not met, the hostage will be sacrificed. Vandalism and artistic justice will be administered." (http://www.artliberated.org/?p=cases&id=27)

Conclusion

The process of my analysis started with the endeavour to set up a model which describes the diversity of the political aspect of public art. The categories of "official", "personal" and "commercial" reflected to a basic disparity between public and private (focusing on privacy but on market as well) perspectives, however they remained not pressed within this contrast, – during the examination other (dis)connections have been revealed as well. Since I was particularly interested in scrutinizing closely these variables, I turned to concrete examples which nicely clarified the functioning of the different types of initiatives. Accordingly, studying the Liberty Statue allowed me, on the one hand, to inspect the processes how a national narrative is (re)constructed by political forces as a means of control, and on the other hand, to realize how memory is put into space, and how this memory is remapped within certain reinterpretational attempts. In opposition to these direct political ambitions, Polyphony and CowParade aimed to fulfil personal endeavours, however, whereas Polyphony through the engagement of intimacy, CowParade through submitting itself to the logic of neo-liberal market.

This simple opposition between the public and private sectors was indeed quite significant, yet their relationship became more tinged through applying theories regarding the interpretation of public space(s) and accessibility of art. The question whether public space is an inclusive (Habermas 1992) or exclusive arena (Fraser 1980, Mouffe 1999) nicely corresponded with the problem of cultural democratisation or stratification (Bourdieu 1990), and all together, they set up a novel connection, i.e. they renewed the linkage between the projects discussed here. Accordingly, the analysis encountered on the one hand, the recognition that public art projects, even if claiming to satisfy universal needs (see Liberty Statue or CowParade), are never able to realize a public space which is fully inclusive, and on the other hand, the detection that these works fulfil the idea of democratisation only if they

undertake the status of being always antagonistic (see Polyphony). In this sense, following Deutsche's (1996) argument, the thesis supports fragmentation and conflict over totality and unity as well.

However, beside these statements the paper consciously is built upon a curve, whose shape turned to be one of the most important findings regarding the phenomenon of public art. Thus, whereas the starting point of my examination resided in the assumption that there is a sharp difference between public art projects initiated either from the side of a public or private sector, the final results culminated in the revealing of a dual tendency. It means, that by the end of this thesis it became realized that, on the one hand, public art, originally an instrument within a politics of nation-states, is increasingly deployed for developing and marketing cities and regions, and on the other hand, that the conflict between formal and informal discourses are turning more and more into the clash of commerce and non-commerce. This twofold route, from national to global dimensions, and from politics to commerce becomes nicely clarified with a joke – commonly told in Hungary during the Soviet occupation –, that will stand here as the symbolic summary of the thesis as well:

> "On a cold November evening, an advisor bursts into the office of the US president and says: Mr. President! Mr. President, the Soviets have begun to paint the Moon red! The president answers: Have they? Ok, thank you. The next day: Mr. President! The Soviets have painted a third of the Moon red! I see. Thank you for the update. The next day: Mr. President, the Soviets have painted two thirds of the Moon red! Are we just going to stand by and let this happen? Don't worry about it, - answers the president. The next day: Well Mr. President, the Soviets have painted the whole Moon red. Now what do we do? Talk to NASA - as the president's reply follows - and instruct them to send a crew to the Moon and write Coca-Cola on it".

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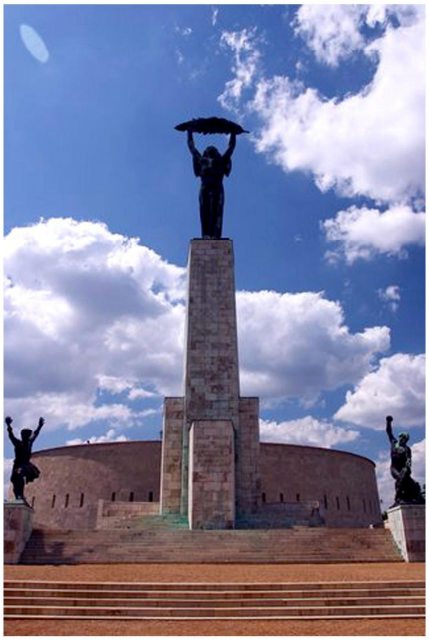
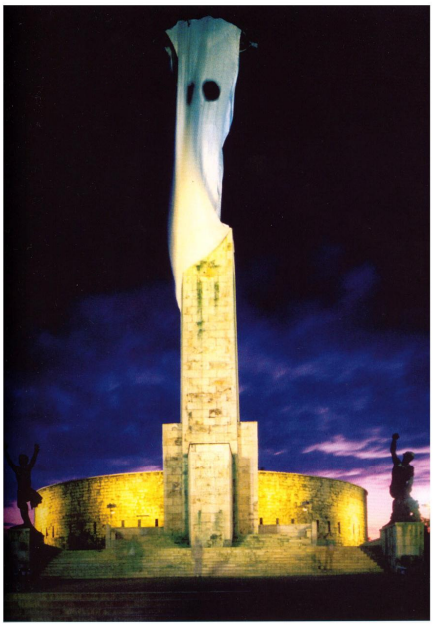
Appendix (Table of figures)

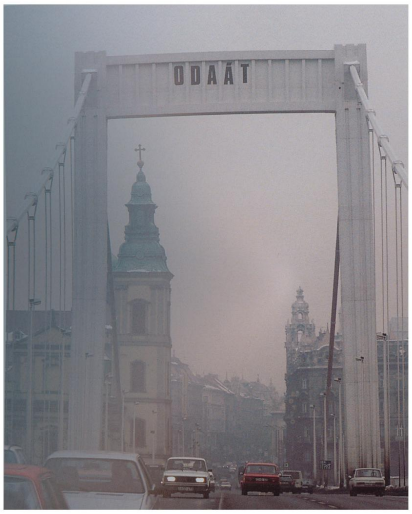
Liberation Monument



Liberty Statue



Tamás Szentjóby: The Statue of Liberty's Soul Project, 1992.



Antal Lakner: Direction Signs, Polyphony, 1993.

János Sugár: Electronic Billboard, Polyphony, 1993.

Pál Gerber: My day is ruined if I don't vanish three evils, Polyphony, 1993.

Béla Máriás: Alone at Zero Square, Polyphony, 1993.

Balázs Kicsiny: Don't Travel! - Travel! "An uncomfortable Exhibition in My Living-room", Polyphony, 1993

Saw-Cow, Cowparade Budapest

Hungarian Orange, Cowparade Budapest

Rubicow, Cowparade Budapest

Goulash-Soup, Cowparade Budapest

Blue Melting Ice Cream, Cowparade Budapest

The Militant Graffiti Artists of Stockholm: Kidnapping and decapitating of a cow, 2004.