

## Notes

1 Reprinted in Eleanor Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists*, New York, 1979, pp. 462-68.

2 Patricia Johanson, "Gardens for Highways . . . Designing for Space, Time, and Motion," unpublished manuscript, 1969.

*Patricia Johanson's Endangered Garden is currently under construction in San Francisco. Among her completed works is Fair Park Lagoon in Dallas.*

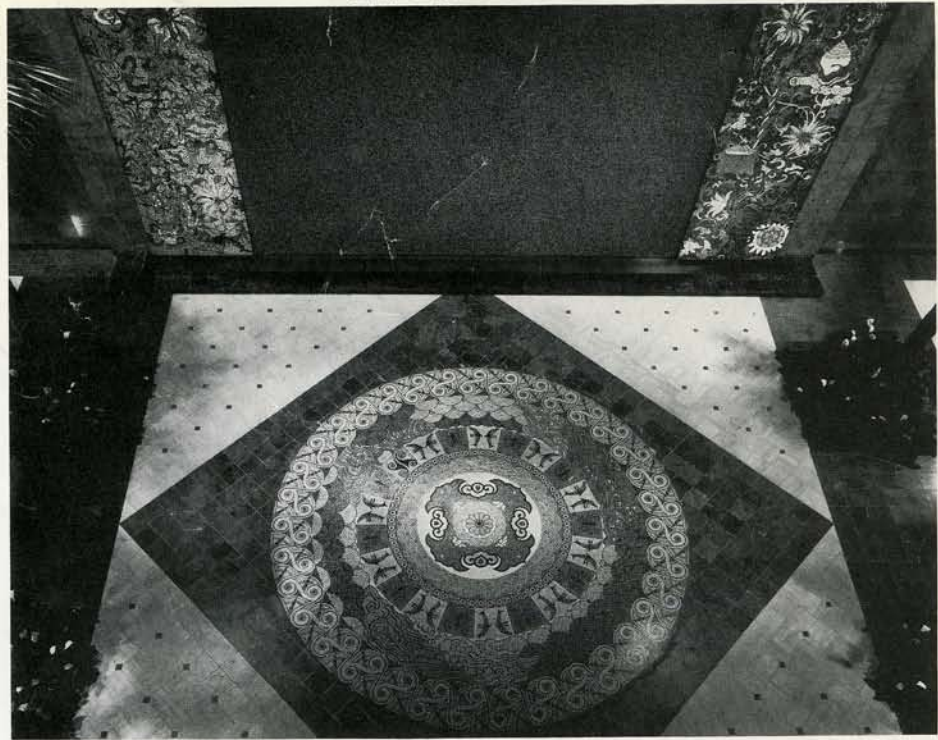
## Joyce Kozloff

The following is adapted from remarks I made recently at two public art conferences: "Public Art in America '87," sponsored by the Fairmount Park Art Association in Philadelphia, and "Toward Common Ground," sponsored by Real Art Ways in Hartford, Connecticut. My remarks were spontaneous responses to statements by other panelists.

1 In defense of plop art: Anything that is so maligned can't be all bad. Everyone praises the plazas of the Italian Renaissance for their congruence of civic space and public art. In fact, they were humanized by statues, often wonderful ones, that today would probably be called "plop" art. It seems to me that in plop art, as in all forms of art, there are good ones and bad ones (ones that work within their context, and ones that don't).

Public art is subject to changes in taste and fashion, just like gallery art. But these changes occur more slowly, as the bureaucratic and construction processes churn away. So "plop" art gave way to "site-specific" art, which is now being challenged by "interference" art (art that questions and disrupts, rather than complements, its surroundings). By now, we all know that what was old-fashioned last year is often this year's hottest trend, so we could expect a return to plop art momentarily. I am pulling for diversity so we can avoid the creation of public art academies or officially approved styles and approaches. That would be deadly.

2 On public art as gentrification: On panels at these conferences, a city councilman from Los Angeles and the mayor of Stamford, Connecticut, have declared that public art is good for cities because it increases the real-estate value of neighborhoods, attracts tourists, and boosts business—in short, the return is great for a relatively small investment. These might be great speeches for an



Joyce Kozloff, *Underwater Landscapes* (aerial view), 1989, floor: marble mosaic; walls: glass mosaic with waterwall in the center. Irwindale, CA, atrium, Home Savings of America Headquarters.

audience of businessmen, but for artists it was most disturbing. We live in cities where gentrification has made it above our means to walk down our own streets, where many artists have been forced out of their studios, where there are homeless people sleeping in front of gourmet food stores, and where ethnic diversity has melted down into a pool of yuppie affluence.

There are a lot of ironies here. I believe that most of us public artists have chosen to work in this arena because we have a social consciousness, are willing to struggle with "extra-art" problems, and hope to have a positive effect on our physical environment as well as a dialogue with a larger community. Are we naïve to think that we can subvert public policy, which often is moving in the opposite direction? Can we affect long-term urban planning? Can we even talk with these people in a meaningful way?

Progressives in the public art field advocate design teams of artists, engineers, architects, and landscape architects. It will be a while before we can evaluate projects produced in that way. It may turn out to be inefficient and costly. It may produce bland, watered-down results (art by committee). It may be too difficult and tortuous for most artists' temperaments. Or, in the best of all possible worlds, it may lead to a redefinition of art and a more productive role for artists in this culture. It will

clearly never be appropriate for all artists or all situations.

The politicians and bureaucrats sounded upbeat, self-congratulatory, self-promotional, even "utopian" (for their utopia). The artists sounded anxious, self-questioning, unsure, even doubtful. Let's keep it that way.

3 On opening the categories: My own particular hobbyhorse is to insist that public art is not *just* sculpture, to point to large-scale public ornament and narrative painting throughout the centuries, across the world. We should be expanding their possibilities. Public art also includes temporal events (demonstrations and performances, orchestrated or spontaneous) and short-lived art pieces that remain in our memories.

Cities and agencies have to begin to take more risks and to encourage artists from all backgrounds to enter the public art field, which should be as culturally rich as our cities. In short, we need to see much more work by women and, especially, artists of color.

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