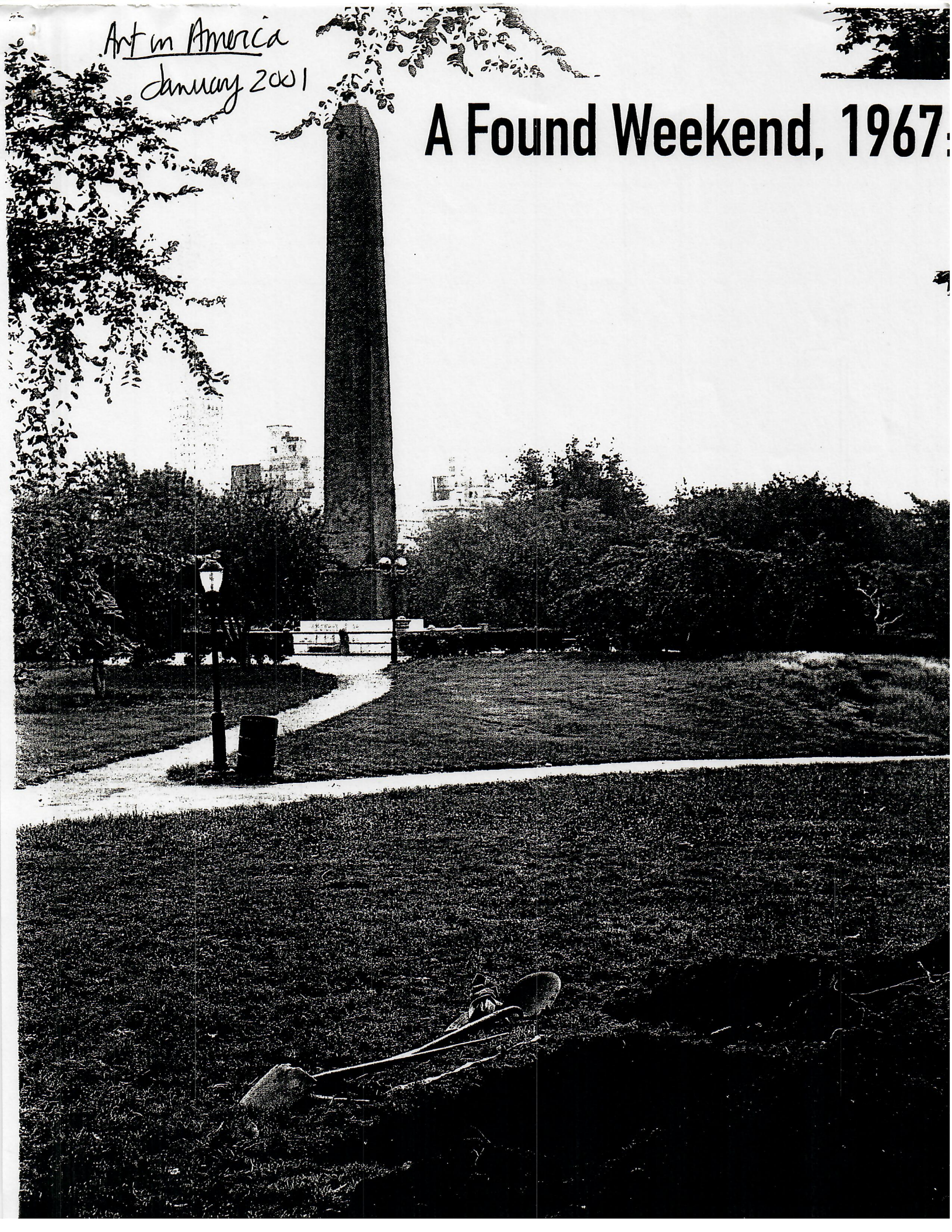


Art in America
January 2001

A Found Weekend, 1967.



Public Sculpture and Anti-Monuments

On the same weekend over 33 years ago, Claes Oldenburg created an early instance of earth art and Robert Smithson spent a day exploring the industrial sights of Passaic, N.J. Delving into the artistic context of the time, the author uncovers a probable link between these two events.

BY SUZAN BOETTGER

On Sunday, Oct. 1, 1967, Claes Oldenburg, at that time known as a Pop sculptor of gargantuan yet flaccid household goods in plaster or vinyl, produced his first outdoor sculpture. It was a 6-foot-long, 3-foot-wide, 3-foot-deep trench that was dug in New York's Central Park by professional gravediggers. The work was temporary, it was not of monumental size or idealizing demeanor, and it consisted almost entirely of negative space. Within three hours, the trench was, as planned, refilled. Officially titled *Placid Civic Monument*, the work was also referred to in Oldenburg's journal as *Hole* and *Grave*. Despite its brief existence, the piece generated much media attention. When, about a year and a half later, sculptor Clement Meadmore wrote about the apparent casualness of what would come to be called Postminimalism, he described the Central Park excavation as an almost apocryphal predecessor: "Oldenburg

is the pioneer in this area, as he was also a pioneer with soft materials. Who has actually seen his famous *Grave* piece?"¹

The day before Oldenburg's action, another New York artist, Robert Smithson, then 29 and less known than Oldenburg, engaged in his own inversion of conventional ideas of sculptural monumentality. On Saturday, Sept. 30, Smithson took a bus across the Hudson River to Passaic, N.J., where he strolled among such sights as an aging bridge, a pumping derrick, gushing pipes and a playground sandbox. Smithson recounted his excursion in "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," a narrative that he published in *Artforum* at the end of the year. There he turned his appreciation for common earth as a sculptural material toward a consideration of the monumental properties of everyday industrial structures.

Neither artist appears to have known about

the other's venture on that 1967 weekend. The event linking these eccentric actions was "Sculpture in Environment," the widely publicized New York exhibition in which Oldenburg's *Placid Civic Monument* figured. Smithson didn't participate in the show (which ran Oct. 1-31, 1967), but certain remarks in the *Artforum* piece suggest that "Sculpture in Environment" provided a stimulus for his embarkation for Passaic. Moreover, Smithson's and Oldenburg's artistic acts shared not only timing, but focus: each work was a radical reconceptualization of "sculpture" that opposed its contemporary definition as something large, metal and abstract. And in reconceptualizing, each artist entered a dialogue with traditions of commemorative monuments and with more recent conventions of public art.

"Sculpture in Environment" was the first exhibition in New York City to temporarily move large-scale sculpture into the public arena. Sponsored by the city's Office of Cultural Affairs, the display served as that agency's contribution to a larger event, the Cultural Showcase Festival. Sculptors whose works were scattered around Manhattan included those specifically known for making large welded abstractions, such as Alexander Calder (on West 135th Street), Alexander Liberman (in Battery Park) and George Rickey (at the New York Public Library), as well as one who was better known as a painter: Barnett Newman, whose 26-foot *Broken Obelisk* was placed in the conspicuous forecourt of the Seagram Building on Park Avenue. The show also included newer sculptural forms such as *Orange Vertical Floor Neon* at New York University's Loeb Student Center, by Stephen Antonakos, wood constructions by Louise Nevelson outside the CBS building at Sixth Avenue and 52nd Street, a Plexiglas-walled experiential environment by Les Levine in the forecourt of the Time-Life Building on Sixth Avenue at 50th Street, and a nocturnal event by Forrest Myers, who projected four carbon arc search-



Left, Claes Oldenburg's completed Placid Civic Monument (foreground) with Cleopatra's Needle in the distance, Oct. 1, 1967, Central Park; part of the New York Office of Cultural Affairs "Sculpture in Environment" exhibition. Above, during the work's excavation, Oldenburg and seven boys observe a gravedigger (left), and Oldenburg converses with Doris C. Freedman and Sam Green (right). Photos this spread Daniel McPartlin. Courtesy New York City Parks Photo Archive.

The prominent presentation of large-scale works around New York City in the "Sculpture in Environment" show attests to the great interest at the time in both sculpture and public art.

lights from Tompkins Square Park. Two of the works on view became permanent: David Smith's *Zig IV* remains at Lincoln Center, presently in the lobby of Avery Fisher Hall, and Bernard Rosenthal's huge cube, *Alamo*, still pirouettes *en pointe* on the traffic island at Astor Place.

This prominent presentation of numerous large-scale sculptures attests to the great interest at the time in both sculpture and public art. Beginning in the mid-1960s, sculpture became for a decade or so the most fertile medium, dominating art production as never before in the modern period. In a November 1964 *New York Times* article titled "The Sculptor Nowadays Is the Favorite Son," John Canaday argued that sculpture had all but buried painting. Contrasting the clear, light-filled, tensionless expanses of Color Field painting to the emotional sobriety of Abstract Expressionism, the *Times*'s chief art critic described painting as "living in an iron lung . . . a rather pretty patient." Observing that "the artificiality of its [painting's] existence must be recognized," he asserted that "for every painter who succumbs to 'the exhaustion all around us,' there is a sculptor who finds new vigor."² Exhibitions at a number of museums seemed to corroborate this view. In the spring of 1966, the Jewish Museum's "Primary Structures" exhibition gave its institutional imprimatur to Minimalist sculpture. In April 1967, the huge survey "American Sculpture of the Sixties" went on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and that fall it was shown at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Several contributors to the exhibition's catalogue commented on the swing in art-world attention. Barbara Rose, for instance, echoed Canaday in a more literal analysis: "After painting had become as flat as possible, in the work, for example, of Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella, there was nowhere to move except laterally toward the perimeter or forward into three dimensions."³

The construction of large-scale sculpture, with attendant costs of shipment and installation, was facilitated by the United States's 1961-69 economic expansion, then the longest on record. The strong economy also supported two federal public-art programs charged with

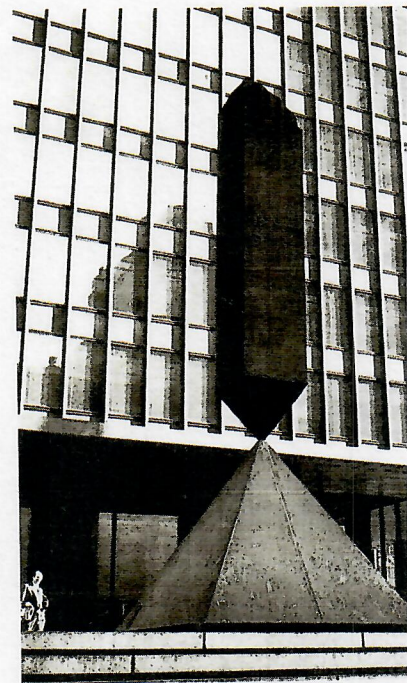
commissioning architecturally scaled work. Between 1963 and 1966, the General Services Administration's Fine Arts in New Buildings Program, initiated in response to a report on federal architecture ordered by President John F. Kennedy, commissioned 44 large sculptures, murals, tapestries and mosaics.⁴ The National Endowment for the Arts, founded in 1965, two years later established its Art in Public Places Program of matching grants. With its Percent for Art program, instituted in 1959, Philadelphia became one the first American cities to require a percentage of a public office building's construction costs to be spent on art. To help commissioning agencies think about this process, the director of Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, Sam Green, organized an exhibition of outdoor sculpture, on view in early 1967, called "Art for the City."⁵ Green was subsequently asked to curate "Sculpture in Environment" for New York City.

Oldenburg's approach to monument-making had initially manifested itself in a group of drawings titled "Proposed Colossal Monuments" in his May 1965 show at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York. Among these drawings of ordinary objects rendered oversized and set in urban landscapes was *Block of Concrete Inscribed with Names of War Heroes* (1965). The massive block was supposed to fill the heavily traveled intersection of Canal Street and Broadway in lower Manhattan, a spot which, according to local Cold War-era lore, would be the ideal target for someone who wanted to drop an atomic bomb on New York City.⁶

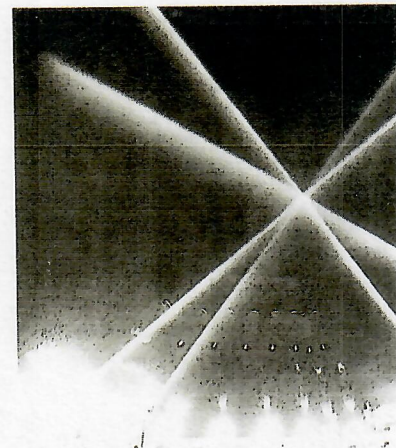
Thus when Green approached Oldenburg to participate in "Sculpture in Environment," the artist already had been thinking about how the concept of the monument could be changed, but had not erected one of his own. *Placid Civic Monument* was not Oldenburg's first proposal to Green. According to a report in the *New York Times* by Grace Glueck, Oldenburg's "initial notion was a traffic jam. It could be 'programmed,' he felt, simply by parking buses at a number of intersections. After all, was not the show to be sculpture in environment?" Subsequent proposals, she reported, included a

silly subway, decked out like a Mardi-gras float, with live music, to liven up strap-hangers' lives; a scream monument—an amplified scream recording that would resound through the city late at night . . . ; and a Free Food Fountain . . . continually dispensing a nourishing paste that would taste perfectly dreadful. "That way," said Oldenburg, "the needy could take it without any sense of obligation."⁷

However, Green, who had in mind a show of three-dimensional sculptures, considered

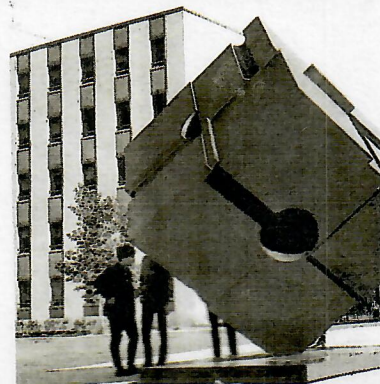


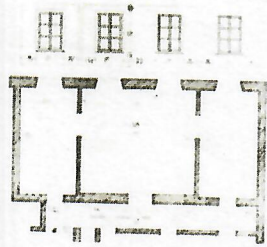
Barnett Newman: Broken Obelisk, 1963-67, steel, 26 feet high; outside the Seagram Building, New York, 1967.



Above, Forrest Myers: Searchlight Sculpture, June 9, 1976, at the opening of P.S. 1, Long Island City; a similar configuration used in his 1967 Tompkins Square Park e

Below, Bernard Rosenthal: Alamo, 1966-67, steel, 8-foot cube, 14 feet high; at Astor Place intersection of Lafayette and 8th Streets, New York City.

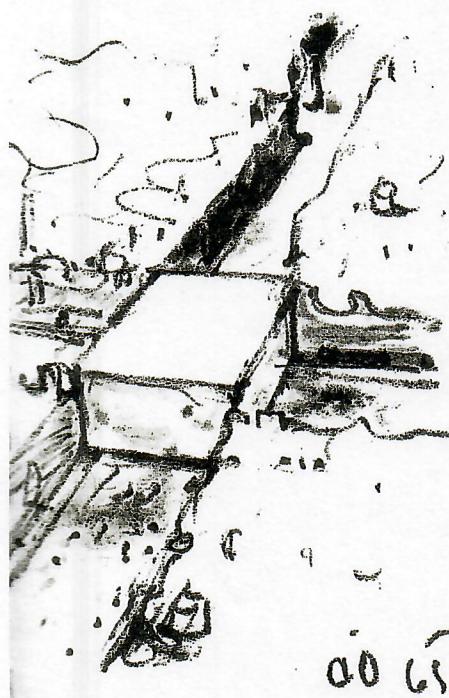




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Walter De Maria's poster for his 1968 exhibition, "50m³ (1,600 Cubic Feet) Level Dirt/The Land Show," at Galerie Heiner Friederich, Munich. Photo courtesy Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York, and Heiner Friederich.



Oldenburg: Proposed Monument for the intersection of Canal Street and Broadway, New York: Block of Concrete Inscribed with the names of War Heroes, 1965, crayon and watercolor, 20 inches. Collection Alicia Legg.

... early Oldenburg proposals "preposterous." Green also rejected Robert Morris's proposal for the creation of jets of steam, as he wasn't interested in such an ephemeral work, and additionally thought that it would be technically difficult to produce and sustain. At the other extreme, Isamu Noguchi, one of the first artists Green contacted, had designed years earlier (a project that

turned out to be too expensive for the exhibition's budget for temporary installations). After negotiations, Green accepted Oldenburg's proposal for a neat rectangular trench, understanding it as an inverted sculpture, a recessed, Minimalist, Judd-like box. They agreed upon its Central Park site behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art, northwest of the obelisk known as Cleopatra's Needle.

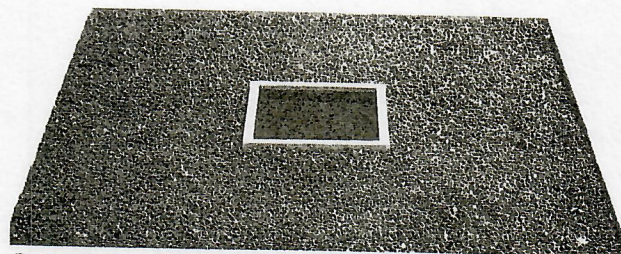
Worried that using the ground staff of the Parks Department for this unusual art work might provoke criticism, Green hired professional, unionized cemetery employees, a decision which augmented the funereal implications of the project. Oldenburg's notes on the piece report that ground was broken at 10 A.M., Sunday, Oct. 1, and "grave dug 10:30—12:30."⁹ After a lunch break, *Hole* was filled in, and by early afternoon the ground was leveled, smoothed over and trimmed.

According to Green, August Heckscher, the city's administrator of recreation and cultural affairs, had wanted this rather perverse sculpture-as-excavation to have been, as the *Times* reported the next day, "shrouded in secrecy." But sometime that Sunday morning, during a ceremony inaugurating the Cultural Showcase Festival a few blocks away at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the veil of discretion was whisked off. Thomas Hoving, director of the Metropolitan Museum, announced in a spirit of jocular faux self-deprecation the digging of "a grave right in back of the Metropolitan . . . Whether I'm supposed to jump into it I don't know." Mayor John Lindsay, who was also in attendance, retorted that the hole "had been dug . . . as a final resting place for ex-Park Commissioners." (Hoving was the immediate past commissioner.) This lively exchange incited some reporters present to hasten to the rear of the Metropolitan to catch the rest of the "grave" digging. A Monday morning newspaper report called the work an "invisible sculpture."¹⁰ Doris Freedman, who as the special cultural assistant to Heckscher had attended the digging, was quoted as saying that she "had been surprised by the artist's proposal [and] knowing the Oldenburg genius, I knew it was not a silly joke and should not be considered as such. I was very moved by the whole thing."¹¹ The account prompted several days' letters to the editors (remarkably genial in comparison to what

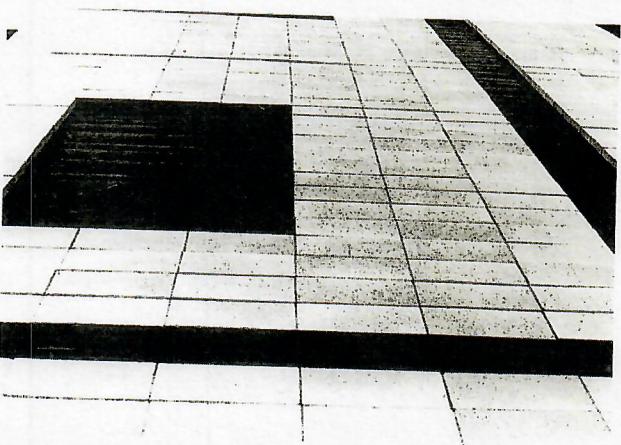
responses might be like in today's political climate), an endorsement of the show in the editorial column, an op-ed column by humorist Russell Baker ("One man's dirt is another man's sculpture") and a short story in *The Atlantic* by Bernard Malamud that is tangentially about an artist who makes such a hole.¹²

Oldenburg's manner of participating in this large exhibition of public sculpture was characteristic of his particular strategy of Pop satire: inversion. Instead of something small shown big, and something hard made soft, as in his works for interiors, his first public sculpture consisted of a recession into the ground instead of a projection upward from it. As it happened, during the preceding months the notion of sculpture-as-hole had gotten a lot of play. Smithson's maquette for a 1966 public-art project proposal, *Tar Pool and Gravel Pit* (a cubic hole nested in the middle of larger cube intended to be recessed into the ground), was exhibited twice in Manhattan in the first few months of 1967.¹³ Carl Andre's March 1967 solo show at the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles consisted of an installation of unaffixed concrete block bricks smoothly covering the floor except for a few narrow rectangular areas, which then became recessed "holes" in the brick "floor."

Oldenburg's *Hole* was also dug at a time



Robert Smithson: Tar Pool and Gravel Pit (model, subsequently destroyed), 1966, approx. 3 feet square. Photo Estate of Robert Smithson. Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York.



Carl Andre: Cuts (detail), 1967, concrete block capstones, 2 by 368 by 512 inches; in his March 1967 exhibition at Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles.

Although ostensibly concerned with the industrial landscape of New Jersey, Smithson's "Tour of the Monuments of Passaic" was in part a dialogue with the New York art scene.



Smithson collecting rocks in New Jersey for a *Vonsite* work. Photo Nancy Holt.

when the artistic use of the unrefined materials specifically associated with the surface of the earth—dirt and sand—was expanding. In the U.S., the most immediate artistic precedent of the Central Park dig was a project Smithson described in "Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site," an article he published in *Artforum* in June 1967.¹⁴ In a paragraph discussing the preparation of a construction site by taking geological borings, he suggested using earth on-site as a sculptural material. "Boring," he noted, "like other 'earth works,' is becoming more and more important to artists. Pavements, holes, trenches, mounds, heaps, paths, ditches, roads, terraces, etc., all have an esthetic potential . . ."¹⁵

A year later, that potential would be explored in the Dwan Gallery's exhibition "Earthworks" (Oct. 5-31, 1968). Oldenburg's Central Park excavation, represented by his brief film of it, got him a place in the show among the piles of rocks and mounds of dirt prominently intruding on what Smithson would term the "neutral white rooms" of art galleries.¹⁶ Almost simultaneously with the

Dwan show, Walter De Maria, another of the 10 men exhibiting in "Earthworks," created a dramatic transgression of interior space in Munich, Germany. His "50 M³ (1,600 Cubic Feet) Level Dirt/The Land Show: Pure Dirt/Pure Earth/Pure Land" filled the emptied Galerie Heiner Friedrich with potting soil almost two feet deep for two weeks beginning Sept. 28, 1968.

With *Hole*, Oldenburg applied his strategy of artistic reversal to the bold erections that characterize both traditional statuary and the expansive steel abstractions then fashionable. At the same time, however, his work slyly referred to sculpture's traditional vertical orientation. Morphologically, Oldenburg's recession and the nearby projecting pillar of Cleopatra's Needle are complementary, together suggesting the dyad of female and male genitalia. They exemplify, respectively, the age-old conventions of associating the female with the earth and the cyclic fecundity of nature and the male with constructions upon the earth or, broadly, culture. These polarized allusions are corroborated in Oldenburg's random notes about the piece, which include the phrases "It was Virgin ground, the Digger commented" and "Inside the body of the Earth." His actions and notes also conveyed the ambivalence toward that mythically female nature that was characteristic of the 1960s, as when he describes the earth of the park as "this thing we broke like a wound on the Sunday A.M." and confesses that he "felt great excitement at the moment of first incision of the shovel."

The figural allusions of *Hole* go further. The trench's length of 6 feet was sufficient for a person of average height to lie down in, thus the length also evokes the notion of being "six feet under." The theme of mortality was not an anomaly in Oldenburg's work—he had already drawn several proposals for memorials to specific individuals—but he had never addressed it so generally or directly.¹⁷

The proximity of this gravelike trench to the Metropolitan Museum summons up the recurrent avant-garde tendency to connect museums with death, a tradition that includes Marinetti's Futurist manifesto of 1909, which describes museums as "cemeteries," as well as a 1967 article by Smithson that calls them "tombs."¹⁸ The ascendancy of sculpture in the '60s was accompanied, we should recall, by polarizing declarations that painting was obsolete or "dead." In a 1965 statement, Oldenburg himself spoke of painting in funereal terms, although he held out hope of a resurrection. Apparently alluding



to the Jewish custom prohibiting the utterance of God's name, Oldenburg leaves out the middle letters of the supposedly sacred medium: "P.....g, which has slept so long! in its gold crypts! in its glass graves! is asked out! to go for a swim! is given a cigarette! a bottle of beer!"¹⁹

Yet, for a publicly minded provocateur such as Oldenburg, repudiation of the institutional art world was perhaps less the point than engaging with the body politic of Vietnam-era America. In the Summer 1967 issue of *Arts*, Oldenburg published an article titled "America: War & Sex, Etc." In a spirit of free association, with language that veers from poetic to pidgin English, he commented on those two themes in life and in his own artistic process:

I have begun to keep, among the notes I turn to, scattered, unpredictably located, faces of the mutilated, or the Polaroid of my granduncle at the last living point of death. These throw me off my search. I stumble around the studio as a result, forgetting what simple and efficient thing I wanted. We are so poorly educated in Death. We can only dish it out . . .²⁰

Hole, made a few months after that article came out, exemplifies both elements in the article's title: War (it is a trench in which to "dig in" and protect oneself, or, if one succumbs, a grave) & Sex (the vaginal "wound"). In his notebook, Oldenburg spelled out the underlying political intent of the Central Park work: "Grave is a perfect (anti) war monument, like saying no more."

By October 1967, Smithson had not yet produced any sculpture or proposals appropriate for an outdoor urban exhibition like "Sculpture in Environment." It's not surprising, therefore, that Green (as he confirmed in an interview) didn't consider including him in the show.

As an essayist, however, Smithson had

Photos from Smithson's "The Monuments of Passaic," 1967, Instamatic photographs; published as illustrations for his Artforum article, December 1967. Left, The Great Pipes Monument. This page, top to bottom, Monument with pontoons: The Pumping Derrick, The Fountain Monument—Bird's-Eye View and The Sandbox Monument (or The Desert). Collection Estate of Robert Smithson. Courtesy James Cohan Gallery.



already addressed what he termed "a new kind of monumentality." In "Entropy and the New Monuments," his first piece for *Artforum* (June 1966), he wrote about the rigid forms and industrial facture of the sculpture that would come to be called Minimalism and how it related to the disruptive conditions of entropy. Listing the man-made, chemically stable materials used by artists such as Judd and Flavin (plastic, chrome, electric light), he noted that the "new monuments . . . are not built for the ages, but rather against the ages." In one of his characteristic verbal inversions, he claimed, "Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future."²¹

Although ostensibly concerned with the industrial landscape of New Jersey, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic," like "Entropy and the New Monuments," was in part a dialogue with the New York art scene and, it seems clear, with "Sculpture in Environment" in particular. The show hadn't yet opened, but with 28 artists installing 32 large works in public places throughout Manhattan in preparation for the Oct. 1 opening, Smithson must have known of it. The show also must have been a topic of discussion at Max's Kansas City, the art-world gathering place where Smithson was a dominant presence. (However, Smithson probably didn't know about Oldenburg's planned dig: Green was trying to keep it covert, and Oldenburg and Smithson traveled in different circles.) It's easy to imagine that, feeling left out curatorially, Smithson was only too happy to get away from the citywide preparations for "Sculpture in Environment" in order to pursue his own ideas about "monuments."

In his Passaic article, Smithson recounts how he boarded an Inter-City Transportation Company bus at the Port Authority Bus Terminal on Eighth Avenue and 41st Street, and got off at the Passaic River. Strolling around, observing a bridge swivel to allow a ship to pass, a highway under construction, sewage pipes and a pumping derrick, he speculatively viewed these quotidian municipal structures as wry "monuments." The derrick was "a monument in the middle of the river," a "Great Pipe Monument" followed the shoreline near "The Bridge Monument." There is nothing remarkable about these blunt metal constructions except that they bear a slight resemblance to some severely pared down, industrially fabricated Minimalist sculpture. But Smithson left those formal analogies implicit. He described taking "snapshot after snapshot" with his Instamatic 400, photographs which became

his essay's illustrations. Like Oldenburg, Smithson had a knack for connecting visual details he noticed to wider, existential observations. The rotation of a 19th-century bridge over the Passaic River to allow passage of a barge "suggested the limited movements of an outmoded world. 'North' and 'South' hung over the static river in a bi-polar manner. One could refer to this bridge as the 'monument of Dislocated Directions.'" Elsewhere, he found it "hard to tell the new highway from the old road; they were both confounded into a unitary chaos."²²

Smithson described Passaic as if it were pervaded by an absence: "Actually, the landscape was no landscape, but . . . a kind of self-destroying postcard world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur. . . . Actually, Passaic Center was no center—it was instead a typical abyss of an ordinary void." Disorder prevailed:

That zero panorama seemed to contain *ruins in reverse*, that is—all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin *after* they are built but rather *rise* into ruin before they are built.²³

His commentary has the sober tone of a philosophically inclined archeological treatise, yet the objects of his attention are common examples of public engineering and urban commerce. The disparity between treatment and objects is encapsulated in the article's absurdly grandiose title. Passaic was a place with which Smithson strongly identified—it was his place of birth. He described it as

a kind of rotting industrial town where they were building a highway along the river. It was somewhat devastated. In a way, this article that I wrote on Passaic could be conceived of as a kind of appendix to William Carlos Williams's poem "Paterson." It comes out of that kind of New Jersey ambience where everything is chewed up. New Jersey is like a kind of destroyed California, a derelict California.²⁴

A few years later, reflecting on his creative process, Smithson said, "It seems that no matter how far out you go, you are always thrown back on your point of origin."²⁵ This thought may have been an allusion to lines from one of the artist's favorite poets, T.S. Eliot, who, in the conclusion to *Four Quartets*, wrote: "We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time." Thus Smithson's Passaic expedition can be considered his bid to insert himself into the dialogue about monumental sculpture via his "point of origin." If he didn't get into the "Sculpture in

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Environment" show, he would bring the show to Passaic. Describing Passaic's "ordinary void," he enthused, "What a great place for a gallery! Or maybe an 'outdoor sculpture show' would pep that place up." It's hard not to read this remark as an allusion to the article's immediate context, and even to conclude that Smithson's bus trip and resulting article were meant as a direct retort to the large-scale, mostly abstract, frequently welded-steel sculptures then popping up around Manhattan.

"Passaic" extends the dystopian mood of his "Entropy" article. There, he had commented on Sol LeWitt's first solo show and remarked that it had "helped to neutralize the myth of progress."²⁶ Apparently, LeWitt's modular structures could be taken as a devaluation of sculpture's interest in mass and surface. Earlier in that article, Smithson had asserted that Minimalist sculptors "have provided a visible analog for the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which extrapolates the range of entropy by telling us energy is more easily lost than obtained."²⁷ For Smithson, the pared-down configurations of Minimalist monuments displayed a reductiveness and inertness akin to entropic decline to low-level stasis.

When he comes to the "last monument" of the Passaic tour, Smithson demonstrates what he means by entropy by describing a sandbox divided between areas of black sand and white sand where a child running in circles would mix them into grayness. "Running in the opposite direction," Smithson noted, "would not reverse the process, but would further decrease the division between the halves, intensifying the loss of order and producing a state of chaos."²⁸

In "Sculpture in Environment," the new prominence of sculpture and of public art converged. Over the show's opening weekend, the actions of two artists who were soon to redefine public sculpture coincided. Viewed in tandem, and triangulated to "Sculpture in Environment," Oldenburg's and Smithson's projects that autumn weekend over 33 years ago illuminate each other and together describe not only interests shared by two artists during that the late 1960s, but also the social mood of the time. The word "entropy," Smithson explained a few years later, "is a mask for a lot of other issues . . . a mask that conceals a whole set of complete breakdowns and fractures."²⁹

The very morning of the excavation, the front page of the *New York Times* carried a

report from Vietnam headlined "At Embattled Conthien, the Marines Dig Deeper." The report suggests yet another interpretation of Oldenburg's *Hole*. In 1967, when Smithson and Oldenburg each participated in rethinking the notion of the monument, they also made work that addressed the "breakdowns and fractures" that the U.S. was experiencing under the impact of the Vietnam War, widespread social unrest and the rise of the counterculture. Viewed within their historical situation, the eccentric becomes revelatory of the center. As Oldenburg wrote about his Central Park *Hole*,

By not burying a thing the dirt enters into the concept, and little enough separates the dirt inside the excavation from that outside . . . so that the whole park and its connections, in turn, enter into it. Which means that my event is merely the focus for me of what is sensed, or in the corner of a larger field. . . . □

1. Clement Meadmore, "Thoughts on Earthworks, Random Distribution, Softness, Horizontality and Gravity," *Arts*, Feb. 1969, p. 28.
2. John Canaday, "The Sculptor Nowadays Is the Favorite Son," *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1964, p. X19. Ironically, the "favorite sons" he was reviewing were Germans, the members of Group Zero, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker, who produced motorized assemblage sculptures—"objects of visual beauty and great fascination"—out of aluminum, glass, wood, Plexiglas, mirrors, water, etc.
3. Barbara Rose, "Post-Cubist Sculpture," in *American Sculpture of the Sixties*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967, pp. 38-39.
4. The government suspended the program in 1966 due to the costs of the Vietnam War and reactivated it in 1973 as the GSA Art-in-Architecture Program. See Don Hawthorne, "Does the Public Want Public Sculpture?" *Art News*, May 1982, p. 59.
5. In the catalogue for the Philadelphia show, Green urged the implementation of an integrative procedure that would not become customary until years later: "Too often the artist's sensibility and sensitivity are used long after all relevant planning has been done. Most often he is then asked to somehow "beautify" the situation. It is hoped that this exhibition will have some effect on city officials by encouraging them to think in terms of what artists have to offer the city while it is still in its planning stages." Samuel Adams Green, foreword, *Art for the City*, University of Pennsylvania Institute of Contemporary Art and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, 1967, n.p.
6. Barbara Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1970, p. 171.
7. Grace Glueck, "Art Notes," *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1967, section II, p. 22.
8. Author's conversation with Sam Green, Jan. 18, 1996, and ensuing. All references to Green are from this source.
9. Claes Oldenburg, "Hole . . .," in Barbara Haskell, *Claes Oldenburg: Object into Monument*, Pasadena Art Museum, 1971, p. 61. All further quotes by Oldenburg about this project are from this source, except where otherwise indicated.
10. Robert E. Dallos, "Sculpture Stirs Interest, Sight Unseen," *New York Times*, Oct. 2, 1967, p. 55.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Letters to the editor, Oct. 2, 6, 9, 11, 1967. Editorial, "Sculpture Invasion," Oct. 7, 1967, p. 28. Russell Baker, "Observer: On Crying 'Art!' to an Unused Grave," Oct. 15,

As Oldenburg and Smithson were rethinking the notion of the monument, they were also addressing the "breakdowns and fractures" experienced by the U.S. under the impact of the Vietnam War and social unrest.

1967, p. 10. Bernard Malamud, "Pictures of Fidelman," *The Atlantic*, Dec. 1968, pp. 63-70.

13. *Tar Pool and Gravel Pit* was displayed in the Dwan Gallery's show "Scale Models and Drawings" (Jan. 7-Feb. 1, 1967) and the Museum of Contemporary Crafts's exhibition "Monuments, Tombstones, Trophies" (Mar. 17-May 5, 1967).

14. Robert Smithson, "Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site," reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Complete Writings*, Jack Flam, ed., Berkeley and London, University of California, 1996, p. 56.

15. Robert Smithson, "Towards," p. 44.

16. Paul Cummings, "Interview with Robert Smithson for the Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution," 1972, Flam, p. 296.

17. Earlier memorial proposals include *Statue of Death* (1965) derived from *The Lorado Taft Statue of Death*, in Chicago's Graceland Cemetery; *Ghost Wardrobe (for M.M.)*, 1967, shown at the Sidney Janis Gallery's "Homage to Marilyn Monroe" exhibition, Dec. 1967; *Sullivan Tomb* (1967), a spatial play on the broom closet where the architect Louis Sullivan slept at the end of his life; and *Memorial to Pinetop Smith* (1967), for the Chicago intersection where the inventor of boogie-woogie was killed.

18. Smithson, "Some Void Thoughts on Museums," Flam, p. 42. Originally published in *Arts*, Feb. 1967.

19. Claes Oldenburg, "The Artists Say," *Art Voices*, Summer 1965, p. 62.

20. Claes Oldenburg, "America: War & Sex, Etc.," *Arts*, Summer 1967, p. 34. In this article he also plays around with his initials as standing for a military "Conscientious Objector."

21. Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," Flam, p. 11.

22. Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," in Flam, p. 70. (Originally published as "The Monuments of Passaic" in *Artforum*, December 1967.) All further quotes by Smithson about Passaic are from this article, unless otherwise noted. The date of Smithson's excursion is mistakenly given in the article as Oct. 20. The manuscript in the Smithson/Holt Papers at the Archives of American Art shows Oct. 30, a Saturday.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Gianni Pettina, "Conversation in Salt Lake City," in Flam, p. 298.

25. "Fragments of an Interview with P.a. [Patsy] Norvell (1969)," Flam, p. 192.

26. Smithson, "Entropy," Flam, p. 15.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

28. Smithson, "Passaic," Flam, p. 74.

29. As quoted by John Perreault, "Nonsites in the News," *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 1969, p. 44.

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