

# THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT NEWSPAPER

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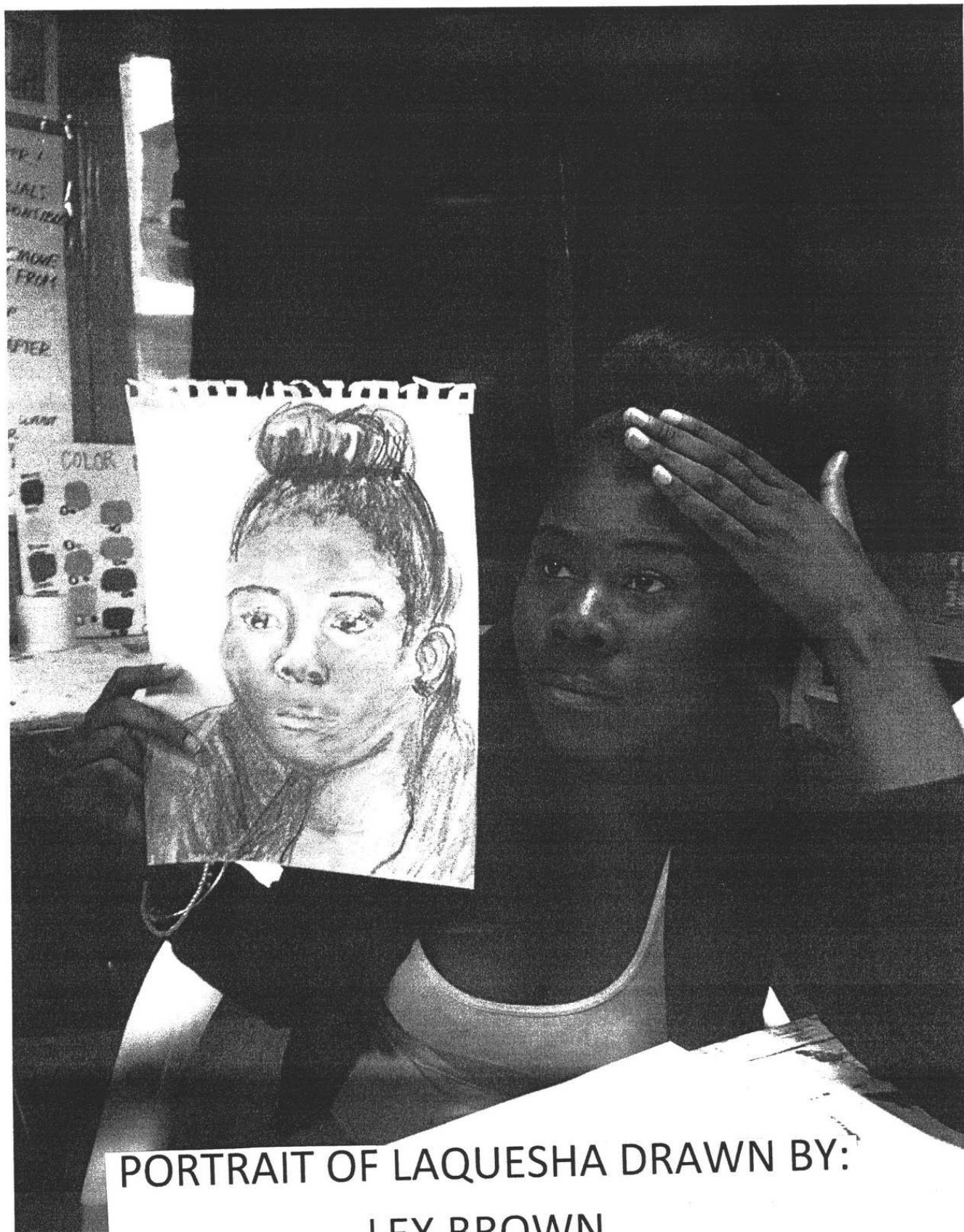
August 5th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

"A periodical, like a newspaper, a book, or any other medium of didactic expression that is aimed at a certain level of the reading or listening public, cannot satisfy everyone equally; not everyone will find it useful to the same degree. The important thing is that it serve as a stimulus for everyone; after all, no publication can replace the thinking mind."  
Antonio Gramsci  
(Prison Notebook 8)



The Gramsci Monument-Newspaper is part of the "Gramsci Monument", an artwork by Thomas Hirschhorn, produced by Dia Art Foundation in co-operation with Erik Farmer and the Residents of Forest Houses

## CHILDREN'S CLASS WITH LEX BROWN WEEK 4



PORTRAIT OF LAQUESHA DRAWN BY:

LEX BROWN

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Bronx, NY 10456

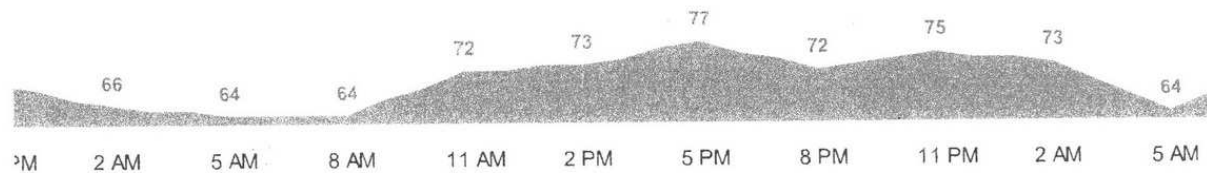
Monday  
Clear



77°F | °C

Precipitation: 0%  
Humidity: 40%  
Wind: 8 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
82° 63°	77° 64°	84° 70°	81° 73°	79° 73°	90° 73°	82° 70°	82° 68°

# Antonio GRAMSCI

## THE MAN, HIS IDEAS



by Alastair Davidson

Chapter IV

### The role of intellectuals

Gramsci believed that the intellectuals were the social group most responsible for social change, whereas traditional marxists have usually assumed that the oppressed class, slave, serf, proletarian, represented the force of change. In advancing his proposition, Gramsci was not denying that other social groups and classes played a part in changing society any more than traditional marxists denied that intellectuals and peasants could also play a part in making the revolution, but, without doubt, he accorded the proletariat and the other working classes a very subordinate position in this process. To some extent this ranking was owed to the notions he had expressed about the philosophy of marxism, about the hegemonical nature of social controls in advanced capitalism, and about the nature and role of the party.

If, as we pointed out earlier,<sup>1</sup> it is not the nature of the means of production which causes, via various mediating processes, consciousness, and causes, in the last analysis, revolutionary will, but consciousness of the relationship of man to machine which can be revolutionary will, then rationality, intelligence, ideas, ideologies and those who make these ideas and ideologies are most important. And who are these but the intellectuals? Furthermore, if the common man cannot, when faced with a bourgeois hegemony of ideas, articulate his own coherent philosophy of life, it must be supplied from outside by the intellectuals. Finally, if the role of the socialist party is to be that of the collective-intellectual striving to build up a counter-revolution among the common people, then one of its main objects becomes to win over the intellectuals first.<sup>2</sup>

This, of course, does not mean that intellectuals can act in vacuo to convert the populace to whatever they wish. Again, this does not mean that marxism is no more than an ideology used by intellectuals to attain their own ends by climbing over the back of the people. Gramsci's understanding of the philosophy of marxism was such that man was free to make his own destinies within the limits that the potentialities of the society allowed. Change would come only when the time was historically ripe for such change. There could be no possibility of the intellectuals as a group having accepted a philosophy which did not correspond with the vague inarticulate feelings of the mass.<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered when reading this chapter that Gramsci is always assuming that a revolution can only occur when the common people have been converted by the socialist intellectuals. Neither can do without the other. Initiative will, however, come from the intellectuals.

Gramsci's argument for the importance of intellectuals starts like this: With the emergence of a new mode of production (e.g. the factory system) and the consequent emergence of a new dominant class in society (capitalists) there also emerges a new class of organic intellectuals "who give [the new social class] homogeneity and awareness of its function not only in the economic field, but on the social and political one: the capitalist businessman creates with himself the industrial technician, the scholar of political economy, the organiser of a new culture and a new law, etc."<sup>4</sup> These intellectuals do not, of course, find the field clear of other intellectuals since every social system finds the incubus of the past still with it. There would be vestiges of organic intellectuals

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2 of this book.

<sup>2</sup> Gramsci defined intellectuals in terms of their function. "All men are intellectuals . . . not all men have the function of intellectuals.

When you distinguish between intellectuals and non-intellectuals in reality you are referring only to the immediate social function of the professional category of intellectuals, that is, you are taking into account the emphasis of the specific professional activity, whether it lies in intellectual elaboration or in muscular and nervous activity." *Intellettualli*, p.6. Some allied problems were discussed in Chapter 3 of this book.

<sup>3</sup> *M.S.*, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> *Intellettualli*, p.3.

from previous modes of production—often these would have fused in time into what Gramsci calls the "traditional intellectuals". These traditional intellectuals, often associated with institutions (such as the Church), which survived through several of the marxist stages of history, but which also included the "intellectuals" proper, those *au-dessus de la mêlée*, feel themselves independent of the new dominant group and are initially hostile.<sup>5</sup> Gradually, most of these traditional intellectuals will effect a compromise with the new organic intellectuals and the values they express, usually because of institutional pressures.<sup>6</sup>

Gramsci is not so unsophisticated as to explain the relationship of the new organic intellectuals with the capitalists in terms of servants and masters. Clearly some intellectuals are closely connected with capitalist production (e.g. engineers, draftsmen, etc.) and these do fall into the category where notions like master and servant have some relevance, but many retain only mediated links with the process of production and these links become more and more tenuous as society becomes more complex. For example, they provide the manpower for the state machinery.

"... The intellectuals are the 'agents' of the dominant group in the exercise of the subordinate functions of social hegemony and political government..."<sup>7</sup>

This sometimes results in differences in interest between the dominant class and the "state" intellectuals because the intellectuals who exist in such number in the organs of the state think that they are the state and do things which the dominant group does not approve of.<sup>8</sup> Even when not in conflict with the dominant class they tend to develop a strong caste consciousness when separated physically from the productive functions of society.

Although society is full of such complexities and contradictions, the function of intellectuals is essentially one of rationalising and providing a justification for the nature of that society, which, in the last analysis, is tied to the mode of production. The intellectuals do not necessarily realise that in providing the *raison d'être* of some aspect of the society—e.g. constitutional law and political theory—they are bolstering up, or justifying the economic processes underlying the independent parts. Nor are they acting dishonestly. Furthermore, they are ready on occasions, to compromise with "traditional intellectuals" and their values.<sup>9</sup>

Society can be seen as a pyramid in which there are a number of levels corresponding the functions of that society. The functions are all intellectually legitimated, each legitimation becoming more all-enveloping and comprehensive as the level gets higher. Finally there is the final legitimising argument—the *Weltanschauung* of the system, which is provided by a few great, or a single great, philo-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.40-1; A. Gramsci, *Il Risorgimento* (Einaudi, Turin, 1955), pp.12, 70-1; *Mach.*, p.237-8.

<sup>7</sup> *Intellettuai*, p.9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>9</sup> *Il Risorgimento*, pp.71-2.

with which to face them. For it has a control over the national language, which dialects cannot combat, and what words you have can determine what ideas you have, as much as the contrary.<sup>15</sup> The net result of the clash between the two views is either, 1) that the common sense of the mass is redirected into new channels, becomes integrated and nullified in the mass culture (consider for example, the folksong of protest which becomes part of the dominant culture when it is commercialised—it loses its "meaning") or, 2) the common sense is slowly replaced, or its area of influence reduced to minimal proportions, as the unending influence of the dominant classes' intellectual agents is wielded. The common man borrows the "world view" of the dominant class and thus it achieves its hegemony. The philosophy of the dominant group becomes the philosophy of the epoch.<sup>16</sup>

From this argument Gramsci derived his belief that the struggle for socialism involved a struggle to establish a rival hegemony and this meant first a struggle to establish a cadre of rival socialist intellectuals and then to win over the bulk of the intellectuals who were the legitimators of the capitalist system, in whose values the mass, *faute de mieux*, acquiesced. Once again, we find that his ideas are in the nature of "preliminary canterers". He suggested that lines of action for socialists could be discovered by examining the methods of the Church or other similar hegemonical institutions.<sup>17</sup>

According to Gramsci every man is a philosopher, albeit at a rudimentary level, and the task of creating a new class of socialist intellectuals is primarily to develop this aspect of the working man:

"The problem of the creation of a new intellectual class consists... in the elaboration of the mental activity which exists at a certain level in everybody, modifying its relationship with muscular and nervous activity towards a new equilibrium and ensuring that the very muscular and nervous activity, insofar as it is an element in a general practical function, which is continually renewing the social and physical world, becomes the foundation for a new and integral conception of the world."<sup>18</sup>

He claimed that this was what he had sought to do through the *Ordine Nuovo*.

Where, then, were those initiators of the development of a new class of intellectuals to come from? This is quite important, because in his description of the development of intellectuals, Gramsci had maintained that they were created by capitalism, or to fulfil the needs of capitalism. Logically, the first socialist intellectuals would have to come from such groups, who would be expected to be loyal to capitalism. But Gramsci assumed a very complex capitalist society which in the course of catering for its needs also created its own contradictions. We have already seen, how Gramsci believed there was a tendency for the intellectuals

<sup>15</sup> *Letteratura*, p.199ff; On this Question see *Passato e Presente*, p.148.

<sup>16</sup> *M.S.*, p.16.

<sup>17</sup> *Intellettuai*, p.39.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

sopher, who translates it into formal terms from its uncoordinated component arguments. The intellectuals thus act as the mediators of the realities of capitalism into values. Since history is dynamic and there are a number of groups of intellectuals, there may be more than one *Weltanschauung* existing at one time.<sup>19</sup> Now begins what I will call a feed-back process. Having provided the justification for a certain system and created an elaborate pattern of values for people living in the society, the intellectuals begin the process of inculcating the ideas into the masses, for this is one of their functions, "the exercise of social hegemony". This is done through institutions and by non-institutional means. The indoctrination of the young was one of the most obvious methods and Gramsci devoted considerable attention to it, but the intellectuals had all the mass media at their disposal as well. In describing the way linguistic innovations would be transmitted, Gramsci listed the following media:

"1) The school; 2) the newspapers; 3) popular and artistic writers; 4) the theatre and cinema; 5) the radio; 6) public meetings of every sort, including religious; 7) talks between more cultured and less cultured strata of the population; 8) the local dialects..."<sup>20</sup>

Insofar as Italy was concerned, he seemed to think that the school and the Church were most important in diffusing the *Weltanschauung*. This is interesting, as the Church was also the archetype of the "traditional" as opposed to the "organic" intellectuals. Furthermore, much of the school system, especially at primary level, in Italy was controlled by the Church.

Facing this battery of values poured at them through the various media is the mass. The mass does, of course, have its own philosophy of life, which is inarticulate, and which Gramsci calls its common sense. The homo faber cannot be separated from the homo sapiens.<sup>21</sup> This philosophy is based on their life experience. It is expressed in folklore and through, for example, folksongs. It is, in Gramsci's words, "the unofficial view of the world". The object of the intellectuals is to combat this with the "official view of the world". When faced with the folklore, the official view is simply presented as superior.<sup>22</sup> Now begins the complex reaction of the mass to such assertions. Among important explanations for acceptance of such assertions would be that of "authority". The common man is much more impressed by "authority", than by the rationality of the ideas presented to him. It matters who tells him, not what he is told.<sup>23</sup> Here perhaps lies the key to the use of the Church as an instrument of hegemony. It has "charisma". If faced with the choice between the unofficial and the official view of the world what will impress our common man is not the rationality of the official view but merely that he is out-argued. Yet, Gramsci points out, one of the reasons why he is out-argued is that the dominant group does not supply him with the conceptual tools

<sup>19</sup> *M.S.*, p.249; Gramsci frequently recognised that foreign intellectuals could secure a hegemony. See e.g. *Mach.*, p.163 and fn.11.

<sup>20</sup> A. Gramsci, *Letteratura e Vita Nazionale* (Einaudi, Turin, 1966), pp.200, 206; *Passato e Presente*, p.172.

<sup>21</sup> *Intellettuai*, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> *Letteratura etc.*, p.215.

<sup>23</sup> *M.S.*, p.16; *Intellettuai*, p.142.

organised as state functionaries to develop needs and corporate interests separate from those of the capitalists proper. This idea must be projected generally to explain the existence of disaffected intellectuals in a capitalist system. Capitalism was always creating new intellectuals to fulfil some specialist function as society grew more complex and technology advanced—it was, therefore, simultaneously creating a larger group of educated men (those whose view of life was above the level of "common sense"), and also creating groups whose links with capitalism were so tenuous that the relationship was almost lost.

Two widely dissimilar groups will be discussed here. First the technician class, which was basic to capitalist production, and close to the economic "core" of the society—close, if you like, to reality. More and more sophisticated technicians were demanded as technology advanced. Thus more and more of the common men were sent on to technical and professional schools, and, as they became more educated (were given more words and more concepts to cope with their new tasks), became potentially more critical. Hegemony became more difficult to secure over such men. Of course, the system tried to combat this by dividing schools into technical and humanist and sending the technician only to the first, while the second was reserved for the higher intellectuals. The last were thus still better equipped than the technician in general argument<sup>24</sup> though the technician was now much more prone to disaffection if he met with counter-propaganda. Even so it was obviously not he who set the ball rolling in the process of making new socialist intellectuals.

These men were far more likely to come from the higher intellectuals, especially those who had been to university.<sup>25</sup> Consider hypothetically a son of a government official. Though his father subscribes to the values of the philosophy of the epoch the father does not necessarily consider himself a tool of the capitalist class. His son is sent to a humanist school where the values of the society are further inculcated into him. Then he goes to university. Now, the university is one of the most essential organisations to a complex society and also one of the most dangerous. Unlike the school, it does not have any significant hegemonical function at all.<sup>26</sup> Instead, its function is that of promoting new inquiry. This is intended, of course, to be beneficial to capitalism but it does create dangers, because inquiry to be valuable must be unlimited. Gramsci describes the difference between school and university thus:

"In fact there is a jump between high school [liceo] and university, that is, between what is school truly speaking and what is life... From teaching which is almost purely dogmatic, in which memory plays a large part, one passes to a phase of creative or autonomous and independent work; from school where study is imposed and controlled in an authoritative fashion, one passes to a phase of study or professional work in which intellectual self-discipline and moral autonomy is theoretically unlimited. And this comes straight after puberty,

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.97-98, 112.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. See Gramsci's description of K. Marx's intellectual formation, which implied university training *M.S.*, pp.104-7; *Passato e Presente*, p.177.

<sup>26</sup> *M.S.*, p.19; *Intellettuai*, p.119.

when the surge of instinctive and elementary passions has not yet finished grappling with the brakes of character and moral consciousness which are being formed."<sup>22</sup>

In a sense society is taking the calculated risk that the young will have been so indoctrinated before going to university that their new liberty will not be misused. The bet is not always won. For the young frequently become involved in a generation clash with their parents and their parents' values, because values are always a trifle anachronistic. This is so because of the essentially justifying qualities of values in any society. In a spirit of revolt they join themselves to those who have least in common with their parents, the working classes, and encourage a rational challenge to the system.<sup>23</sup> They become the first intellectual leaders of the mass and raise from the mass their own intellectuals. Often, of course, they desert the mass when a particular historical turn occurs. The others who remain loyal tend, in turn, because they are "pure" intellectuals, to emasculate or systematise the working class philosophy in an unrewarding direction.<sup>24</sup> What matters is that they have started the process of creating new socialist intellectuals. The socialist intellectuals, who would be of diverse grades of competence, would attempt to convert the mass of the workers to their Weltanschauung through the "collective intellectual", the party.<sup>25</sup> They should, Gramsci directed, use different techniques depending on what group they were attempting to convert. Eventually, if their actions were appropriate, they would succeed in establishing a counter-hegemony. This hegemony would be accepted for the same reasons that the capitalist hegemony had been accepted, but it would owe its victory over the dominant philosophy to the fact that it accorded more precisely with popular wishes than the dominant philosophy.

One of the first tasks, according to Gramsci, was to discredit or refute the linchpin of the opposing value system—that is its formal philosophy and this meant concentrating more attention on the elite groups of your opponent's intellectuals than on the middle ranks.<sup>26</sup>

"On the ideological front . . . the defeat of the auxiliaries and lesser followers has an almost negligible importance; on this front it is necessary to fight against the most eminent. Otherwise you will confuse the newspaper with the book, the little daily polemic with the scientific work . . ."<sup>27</sup>

Obviously, this would mean the very highest of intellectual competence on the part of the socialists.

Another task would be to win over more and more of the uncommitted intellectuals, that is, those uncommitted in an ideological sense. Many of these would belong to the "traditional"

<sup>22</sup> *Intellettuai*, p.102.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.42-3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; *M.S.*, p.88.

<sup>25</sup> *Mach.*, p.100; See Chapter 3 of this book as well.

<sup>26</sup> *M.S.*, p.130.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

to advance the socialist point of view clearly. This would have to be gradually worked up to in a process of gradual conversions from one position to another. One of the problems which would be faced would be that of identifying the main concepts to be combated, that is, identifying those twists of emphasis made when the exponents of the ruling hegemony "converted" or "diverted" the "common sense" of the populace, thus nullifying it. The consideration which Gramsci gave this problem enables us to reconstruct what sort of ideas he might have had on how to reach the populace directly. But it should be remembered that he believed that by winning the intellectuals you also won the populace and therefore discussed the conversion of the populace at much less length.

"But how does one know which errors are most widespread and rooted? Obviously, it is impossible to make a statistical compend of ways of thinking and of single individual opinions, with all the combinations which ensue in groups and little groups, which would give a total and systematic picture of the effective cultural situation and of the ways in which 'common sense' really presents itself: there remains nothing else to do but to review systematically the literature which is most widely diffused and accepted by the populace, combined with a study and criticism of the ideological currents of the past, each of which 'can' leave a sediment, combined in various ways with what has gone before and what will come after."<sup>28</sup>

Gramsci did devote considerable space to what he thought that the general populace liked most in literature but he did not seem to have then made the next step about the nature of the material the socialist should present to the populace as clearly as he did in dealing with the intellectual classes. He believed that the populace, the common man, bought the papers "for the comics". [At the time he was writing the serial was more common].<sup>29</sup> Escapist serials, historical romances, love stories, whodunits and so on were popular.<sup>30</sup> Superman had become the opiate of the poor, in Gramsci's estimation. They were so involved in the lives of their mythical heroes that they talked of them and followed them as if they were alive. Although Gramsci did not say so, it is legitimate to infer that socialist literature for this social group should be governed by the same criteria as applied to that for the intellectuals: to speak to them in their own language at the level that they understood, and bring them around to socialist positions gradually.

Of course, the directions Gramsci made about the role, direction and nature of a journal have implicit value for the other media which he listed.

He also considered socialist schooling at some length. Only very occasionally did he mention such institutions as Popular Universities, concentrating instead on schooling at the primary and tertiary stage because this was when the values of the ruling class were inculcated. Whether, in discussing this problem, he assumed a situation in which the socialists controlled their own schools or where they had converted the teachers of schools controlled by other groups is not clear. Nor is it clear whether in discussing schooling, he was examining the possibilities in a socialist state, or whether

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>29</sup> *Letteratura etc.*, p.104.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.104-117.

intellectuals and the capitalists would also be seeking to win them over.<sup>28</sup> It would be necessary to have an accurate knowledge of their cultural and moral values, as this would facilitate either their destruction and replacement with new intellectuals or their assimilation.<sup>29</sup>

Where there were gaps in social leadership, the socialists should establish their own intellectuals (who, like native bishops, would have more influence than an alien).

" . . . the Pope understands the mechanism of cultural reform of the peasant and popular masses better than many elements of the lay left: he knows that the great mass cannot be converted one by one, it is necessary to speed up the process, to conquer the natural leaders of the great mass, that is, the intellectuals, or to create intellectuals of a new type, thus the creation of native bishops."<sup>30</sup>

So the point of this exercise was to win over or to destroy the groupings which provided the values of capitalism and secured a capitalist hegemony. When this was done the new socialist values would secure a dominant hegemony. However, the process of converting the masses to socialism was a constant dynamic process which involved all sorts of action in addition to this all-important development and capture of what, in current terminology, are known as the ideology-makers.

Obviously, Gramsci's intellectuals would pour propaganda of a socialist sort back to mass using the same media that the capitalists intellectuals did. This necessitated the control of such media. This in turn meant the development of socialist institutional power. Gramsci devoted considerable attention to the possibility of socialist schools and especially newspapers and journals.

"It is necessary . . . to recognise openly that journals per se are sterile, if they don't become the motor force and the formative force of cultural institutions of a mass nature, that is, serve closed circles."<sup>31</sup>

They should therefore be tailored to suit their audiences, always remembering that the object was to convert the readers to the socialist world view. Gramsci gave detailed instructions on the nature of journals which were designed to reach intellectuals but was not so specific on those designed for the common man. He distinguished three types of journals which "would give satisfaction to the demands of a certain mass of the public which was most intellectually active." These were high-class academic journals intended for the intellectual elite; the more "popular" journals of historical and critical content and journals which had something of the second together with something of the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*. In each case they should be tightly controlled and consistent in their content. On the other hand it should be recognised that intellectuals had their own language and that within themselves they had different languages. Journals should cater for the differing tastes. It would not simply be enough

<sup>28</sup> *Intellettuai*, p.7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.135.

he was merely commenting on the inadequacies of schooling in the Italian state school system. However, what he said will be discussed briefly here, on the assumption that some of it might be relevant to the establishment of a counter-hegemony.

First of all, schools should not be divided into grades, intended for various strata in the society. There should be no technical schools and "humanist" schools. Vocational training, though apparently legitimate in a complex technology, was to be subordinated. The reason for Gramsci's view has already been mentioned: this dual system served the dominant hegemony, turning the attention of lower strata away from general questions concerning Man to functional questions; from the "why" to the "how". It also left a small elite considerably better equipped to handle general arguments than the common man. In general, Gramsci pointed out, the "humanist" school was reserved for the capitalists proper and their leading intellectuals.<sup>32</sup> Instead there should be a general "humanist" training followed by a specialist training. This did not mean that there should be no intellectual hierarchy; rather there should be an organised system of working groups under the leadership of the most expert because this would cause the most backward to develop fastest. All these schools should be organised in a general highly-centralised education system together with the universities and academics and work to advance the capacity of the common man. "The aim is to obtain a centralisation and a drive of the national culture which would be greater than that of the Catholic Church."<sup>33</sup>

Of course, the whole of the process of conversion would have to be coordinated by a homogeneous centre, presumably, at one level, the socialist party, and, at a final level, in accord with the teachings of the intellectual leaders of socialism.

It would be a long and arduous task involving many setbacks. As Gramsci wrote:

"It is necessary to create sober, patient men who do not lose hope before the worst horrors and who are not excited by rubbish. Pessimism about the intellect, optimism about the will!"<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Intellettuai*, p.97.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

# A TEXT FROM THE ARTIST: THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

## STATEMENT : « Altars »

An altar is a personal, artistic commitment. I want to fix my heroes. The altars want to give memory of someone who is dead and who was loved by somebody else. It is important to testify ones' love, ones' attachment. The heroes can't change, but the altars' location can change. The altars could have been made in other cities, countries. The altars could be done in different locations: on a street, on a side way, in a corner. These very local sites of memory become very universal sites of memory, by virtue of their location. That is what interests me. I choose locations that are not in the center or in strategic point of a city, just any place. In the same way as people can die anywhere. Most people don't die in the middle of a square or on a beautiful boulevard; their deaths rarely happen in a strategic location, even famous people don't die in « the center ». There is no hierarchy of location between anonymous and famous people. There are unexpected locations. The location is important not in relationship to the layout of the city, but in relation to the people who died. This gives me the plan for locating the altars. These altars are questioning the status of a monument today by their form, by their location, and by their duration. Thus, the choice of location is determining for my statement on work in public space and my critique of monuments. The form of these four altars comes from spontaneous altars, that one sees here or there, made by those who wish to give a precarious homage to someone deceased on the spot, by accident, suicide, murder or heart attack (Gianni Versace, J.F. Kennedy Jr., Olaf Palme). The forms of these homages are alike, whether made for celebrities or made for the unknown: candles, flowers, often wrapped in transparent paper, teddy bears and stuffed animals, written messages on scraps of paper with hearts and other love symbols. With this wild mixture of forms, the messages of love and attachment to the deceased person are expressed without any aesthetic concern; it is this personal commitment that interests me. It comes from the heart. It is pure energy. One is not preoccupied with the form-quality of the elements, but only with the message that is to be conveyed. The reason why I have chosen artists that I love for their work and for their lives is: no cynicism, only commitment. The forms of these altars, that are profane and not religious, convey a visual form based on weakness. The forms and locations of the altars show the precarious aspect of the work. It is because of necessity and urgency that they are there. The cruelty and the non-spectacular of these monuments makes them untouchable by people walking by, proprietors, street-cleaners, dog-walkers, policemen. Everyone could be concerned. Everyone is concerned. These altars will disappear sooner or later. The average duration of the altars is of two weeks. The disappearance of the altar is as important as its presence. The memory of what is important doesn't need a monument.

I have made four altars for four artists and writers : Piet Mondrian, Otto Freundlich, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Raymond Carver. The Piet Mondrian altar was shown in Geneva in 1997; the Otto Freundlich altar was shown in 1998 in Basel and Berlin; the Ingeborg Bachmann altar was shown in 1998 in Zürich and in Halle Tyrol in 1999 and in Berlin, in the subway in 2006 (U2-Alexanderplatz, curator: NGBK); and the Raymond Carver altar was shown in 1998 in Fribourg, in Philadelphia (curator: The Galleries at Moore) and Glasgow (" Vivre sa vie" groupshow) in 2000, and in 2002 near the South Public Library in Miami.

T.H. February 2006

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Thomas Hirschhorn "Mondrian Altar", 1997.  
Exhibition 'September 11', MoMA PS1, 2011  
Courtesy Carol Greene, New York, and Gladstone Gallery, New York



Thomas Hirschhorn "Ingeborg Bachmann Altar", 1998.  
'Freie Sicht zum Mittelmeer', Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland, 1998



Thomas Hirschhorn "Otto Freundlich Altar", 1998.  
"Berlin-Berlin Biennale", Berlin, Germany, 1998



Thomas Hirschhorn "Raymond Carver Altar", 1999.  
Exhibition 'Vivre sa Vie', Glasgow, 2000



# POETRY

## Necrological

The friar had said his paternosters duly  
And scourged his limbs, and afterwards would have slept;  
But with much riddling his head became unruly,  
He arose, from the quiet monastery he crept.

Dawn lightened the place where the battle had been won.  
The people were dead -- it is easy he thought to die --  
These dead remained, but the living were all gone,  
Gone with the wailing trumps of victory.

The dead men wore no raiment against the air,  
Bartholomew's men had spoiled them where they fell;  
In defeat the heroes' bodies were whitely bare,  
The field was white like meads of asphodel.

Not all were white; some gory and fabulous  
Whom the sword had pierced and then the grey wolf eaten;  
But the brother reasoned that heroes' flesh was thus.  
Flesh fails, and the postured bones lie weather-beaten.

The lords of chivalry lay prone and shattered.  
The gentle and the bodyguard of yeomen;  
Bartholomew's stroke went home -- but little it mattered,  
Bartholomew went to be stricken of other foemen.

Beneath the blue ogive of the firmament  
Was a dead warrior, clutching whose mighty knees  
Was a leman, who with her flame had warmed his tent,  
For him enduring all men's pleasantries.

Close by the sable stream that purged the plain  
Lay the white stallion and his rider thrown,  
The great beast had spilled there his little brain,  
And the little groin of the knight was spilled by a stone.

The youth possessed him then of a crooked blade  
Deep in the belly of a lugubrious wight;  
He fingered it well, and it was cunningly made;  
But strange apparatus was it for a Carmelite.

Then he sat upon a hill and bowed his head  
As under a riddle, and in deep surmise  
So still that he likened himself unto those dead  
Whom the kites of Heaven solicited with sweet cries.

John Crowe Ransom



**John Crowe Ransom**  
(30 April 1888 - 3 July 1974 / Pulaski Tennessee)

## Calling Me to The Desert

In the desert sand lifts  
And swirls  
A violent storm  
Forming my name  
To be whispered across the continents  
Golden sand  
No! it's golden money  
Calling me to the desert

Nothing thrives  
Nothing grows  
Perhaps my relationships will die  
Once I'm living in the desert

The blue sky holds  
All of the promises like clouds  
they'll cushion me  
The sun burns down  
And the women hide behind swathes of black  
Forbidden, forgotten  
Yet as a woman I am being  
Called towards the desert

Nothing thrives  
Nothing grows  
Perhaps my beating heart will die  
Once I'm living in the desert

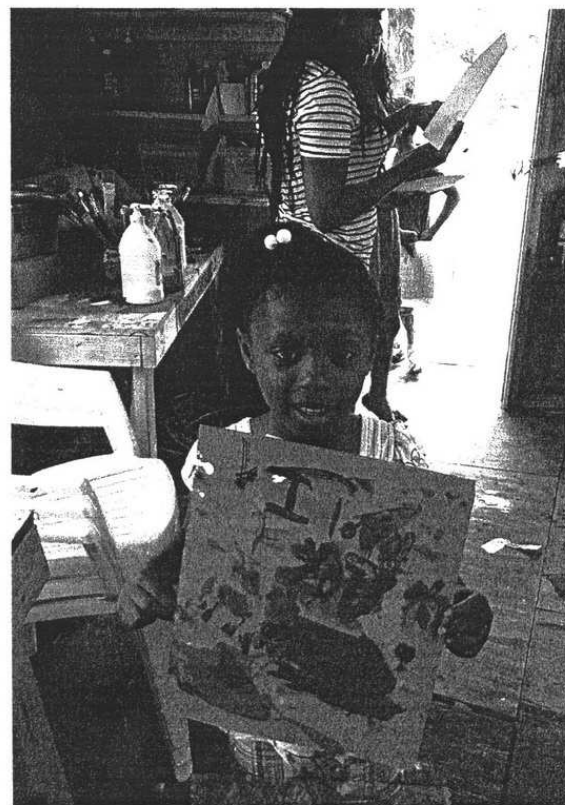
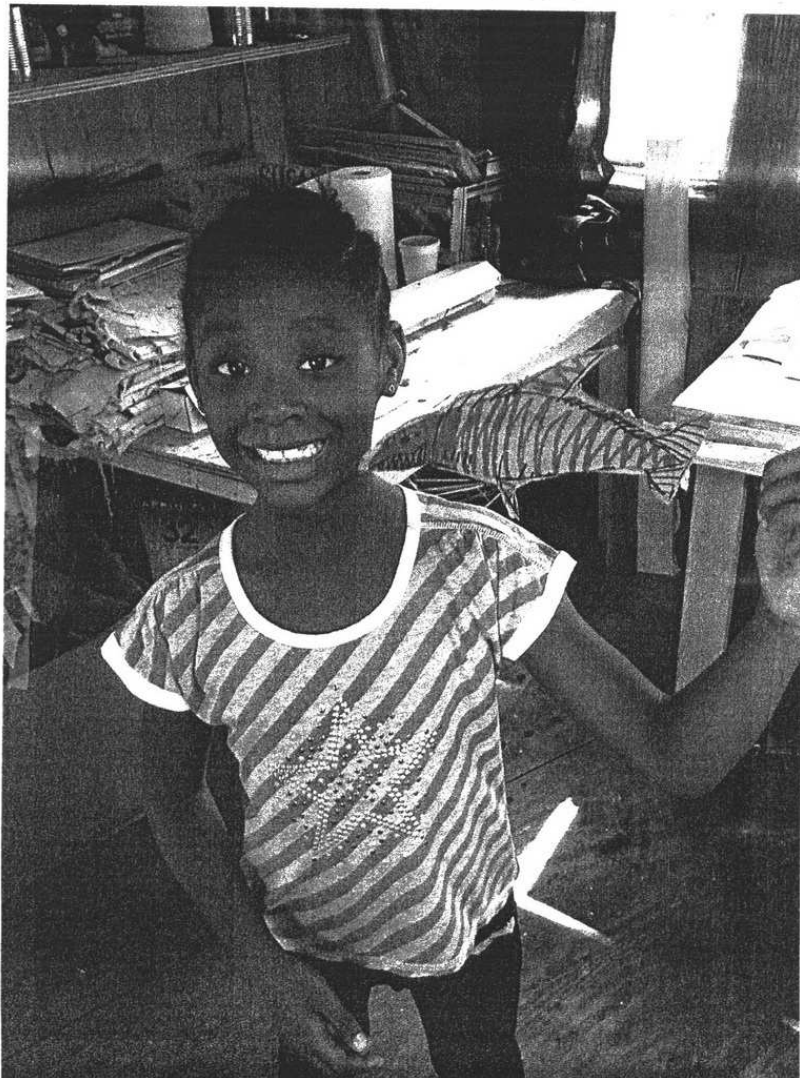
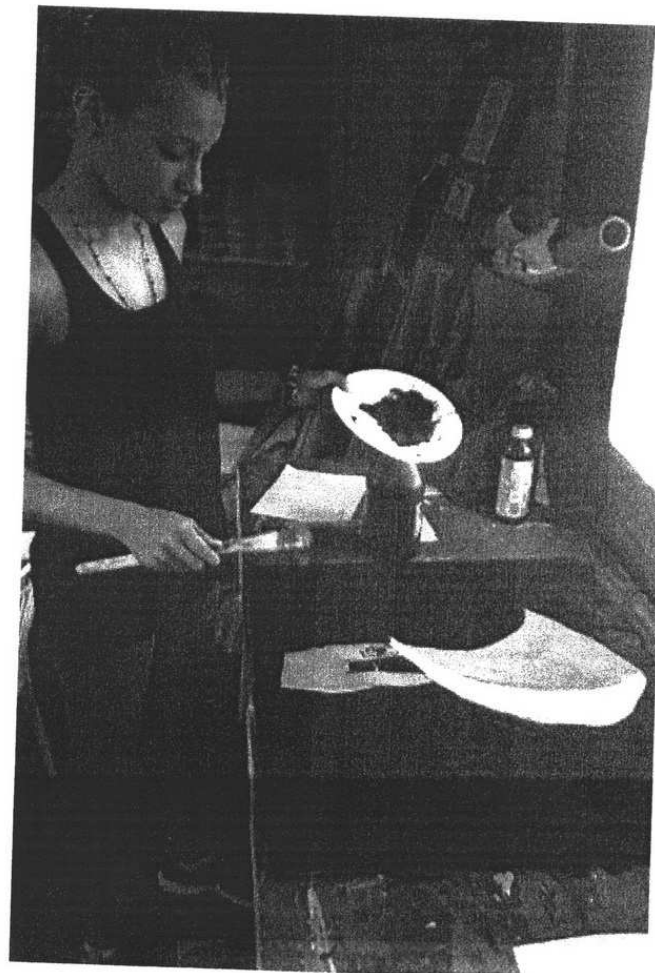
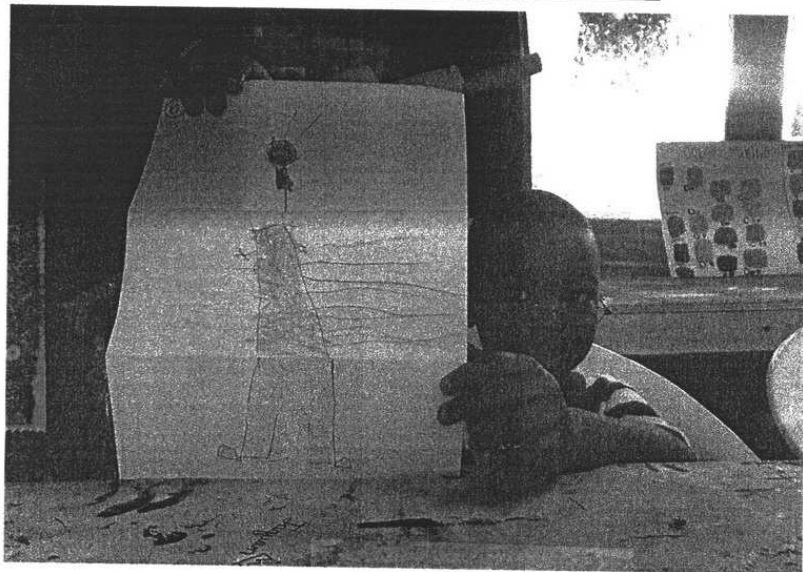
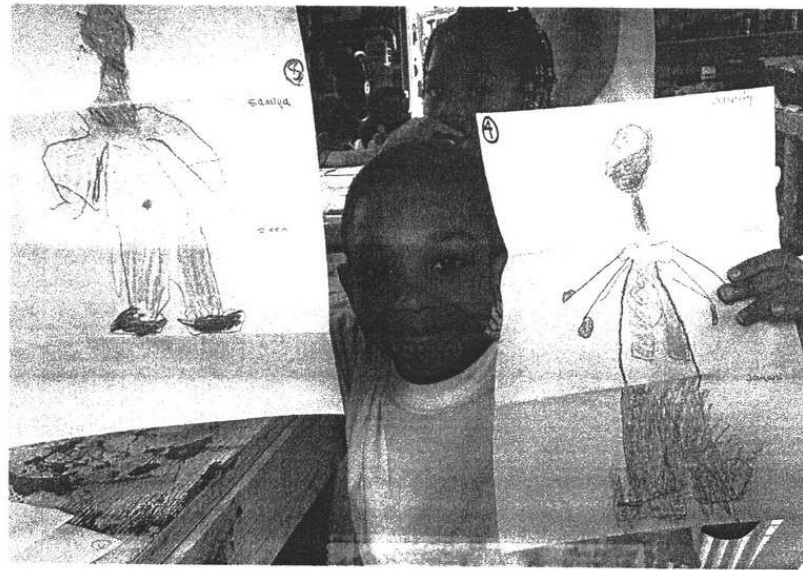
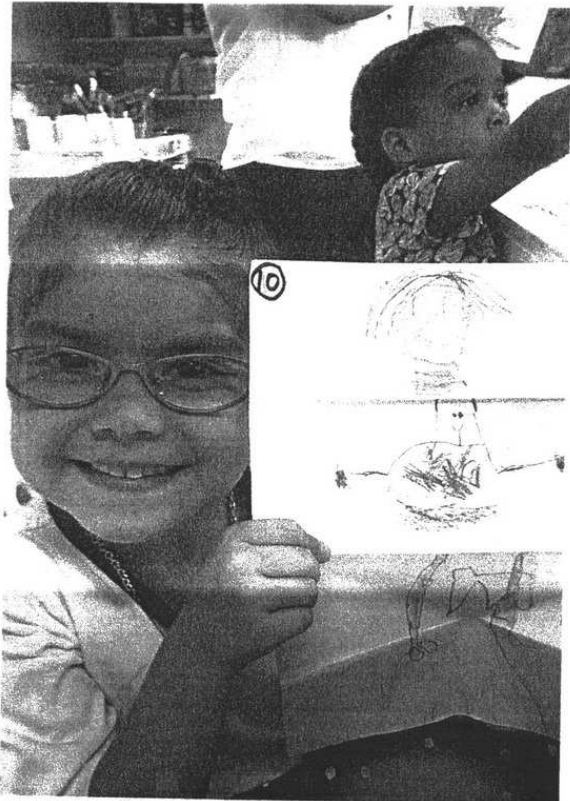
Bedouins keep moving  
Enough to quench their thirst  
Camels, oasis  
Princes and Arabian nights  
Princesses locked in the palace  
Duty bound and restricted  
Like a nurse being  
Called towards the desert

Nothing thrives  
Nothing grows  
Perhaps my very self will die  
Once I'm living in the desert

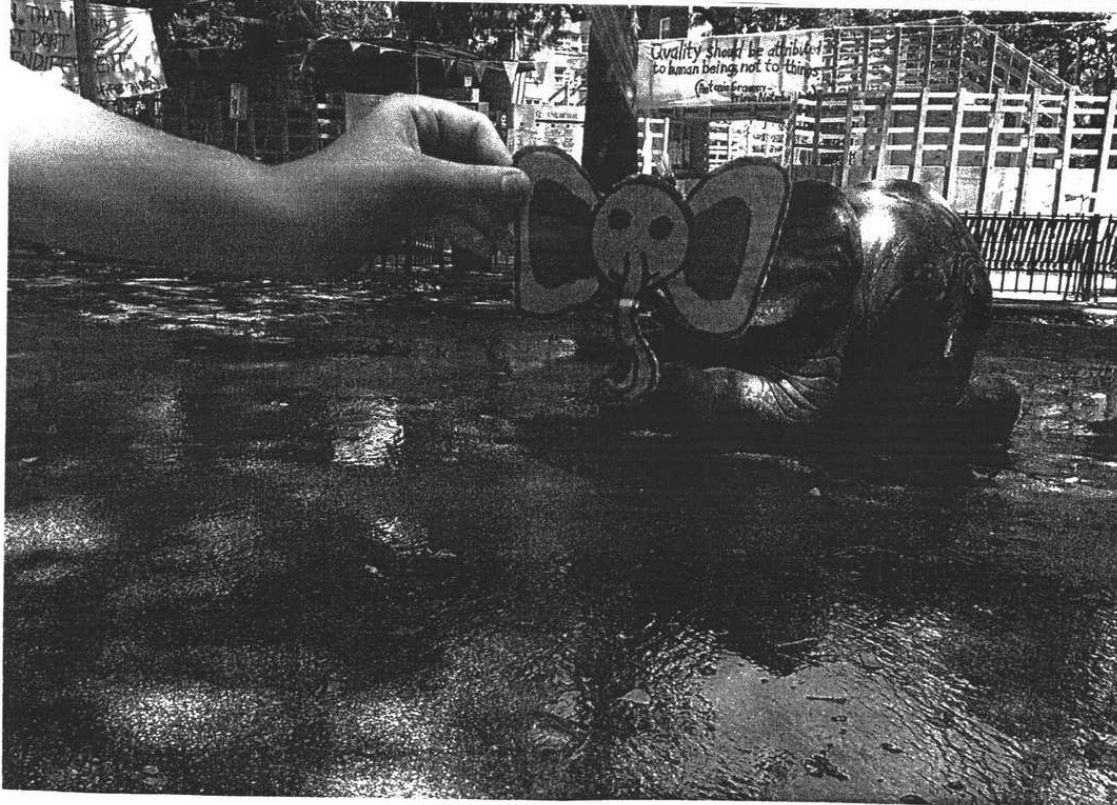
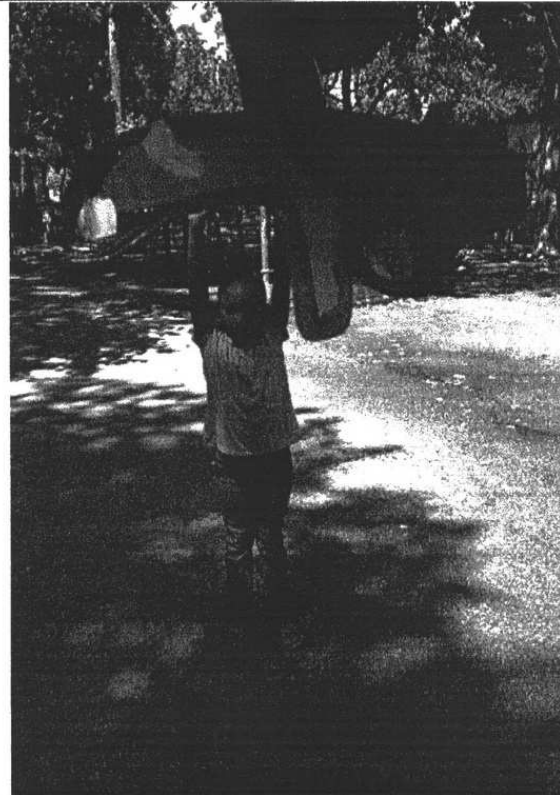
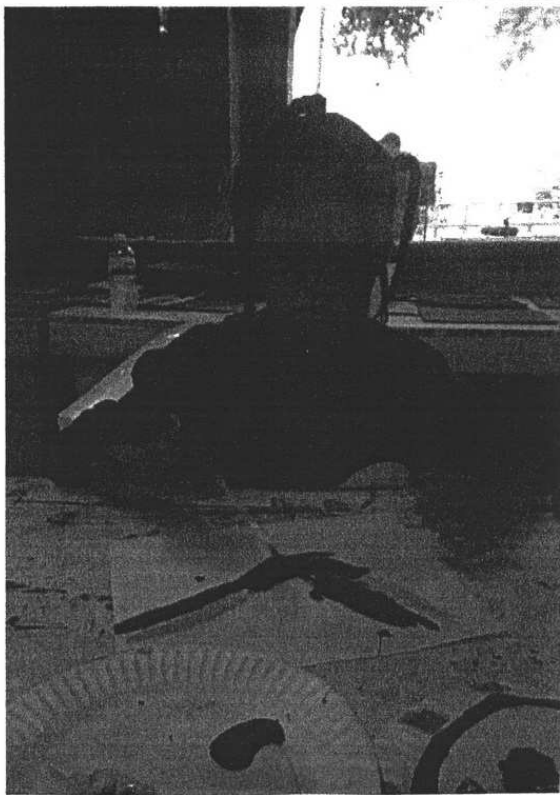
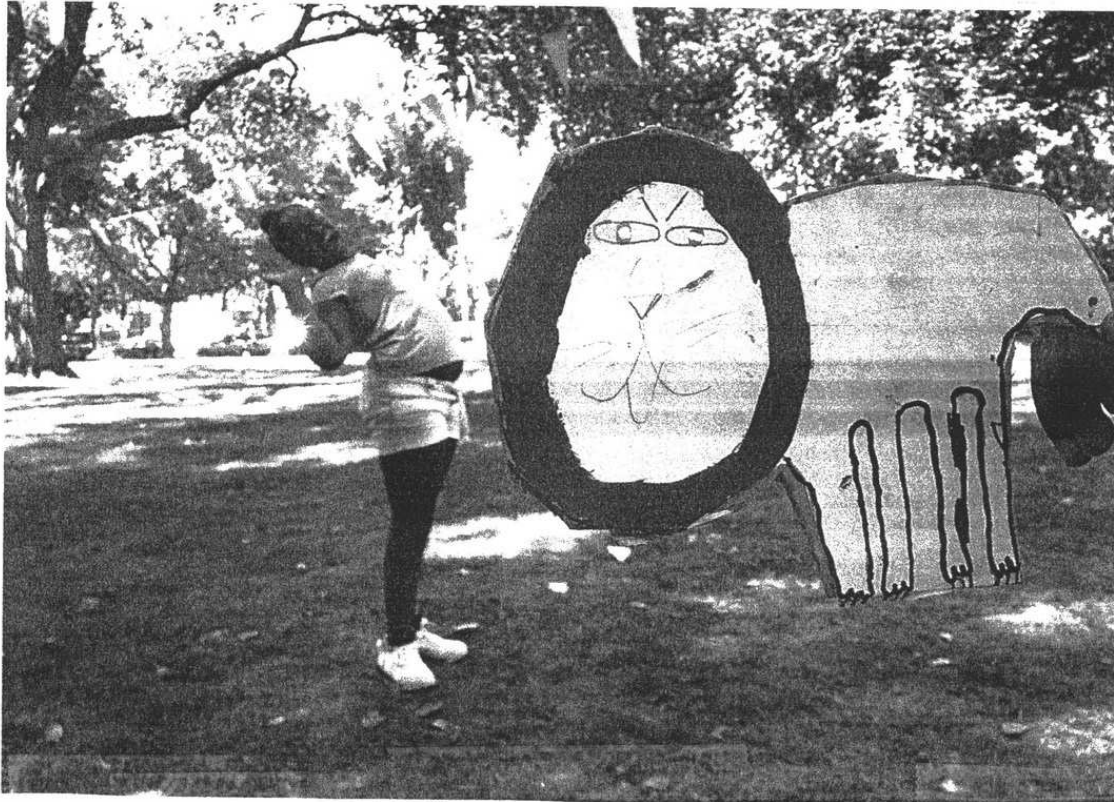
Ellen Shaw



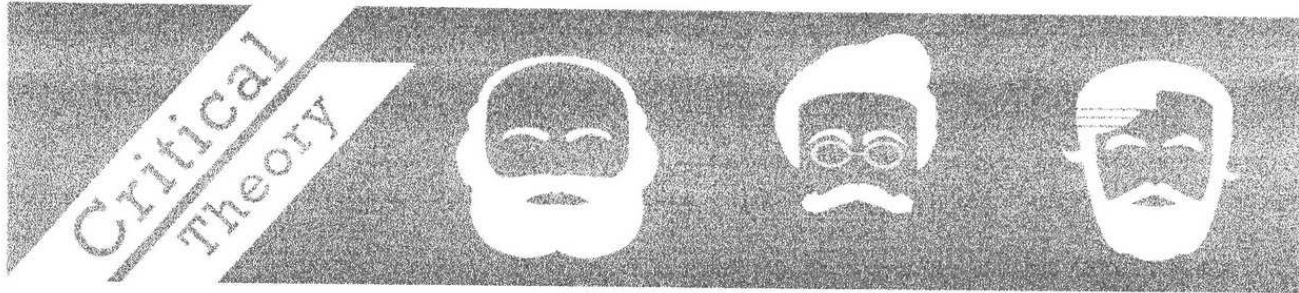
**Children's Class with Lex Brown - Week 4**



**Children's Class with Lex Brown - Week 4**



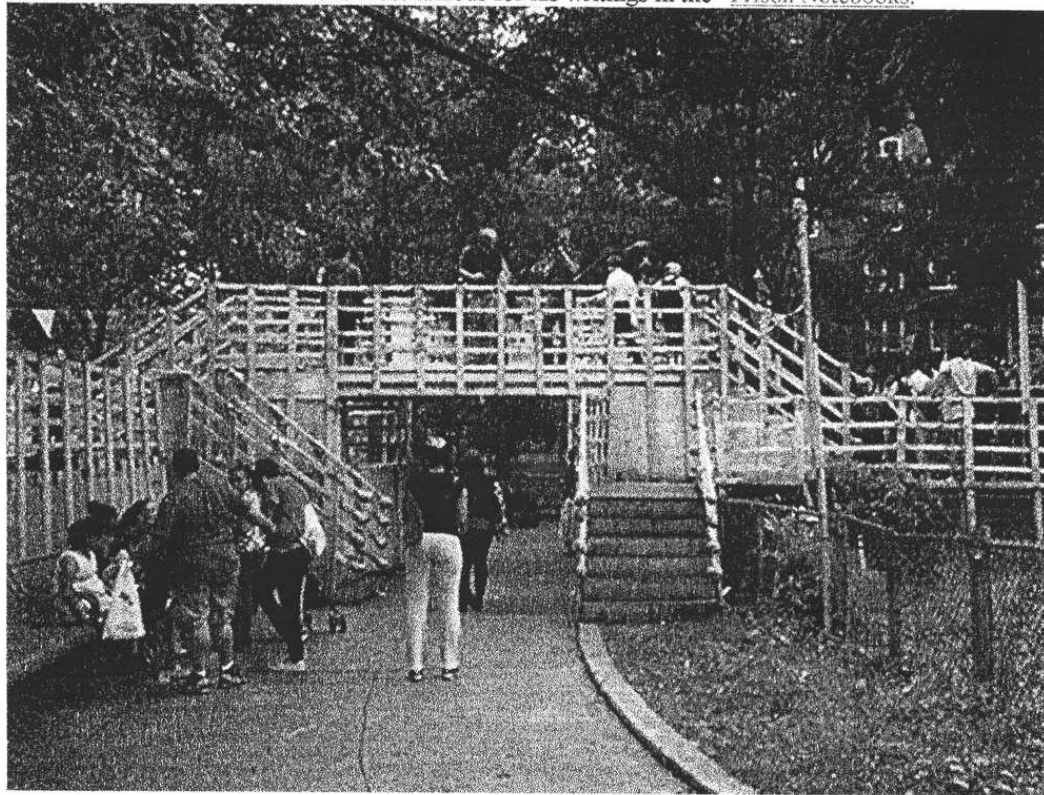
# FEEDBACK /WHAT'S GOING ON?



## The Bronx Now Has a Monument to Antonio Gramsci

July 12th, 2013 | by Eugene. Published in [News](#) | [4 Comments](#)

Have you ever walked through a public housing complex and exclaimed, “Geez, after all the years of city neglect, rampant mold, bedbugs, and a [gross indifference](#) to the gaping hole in my ceiling, we could really use a monument to some long-dead Marxist.” That’s pretty much what Swiss artist [Thomas Hirschhorn](#) said when he showed up to New York City, sat in on a bunch of public housing resident meetings, and decided to set up shop at the Forest Houses in the Bronx to build a monument to [Antonio Gramsci](#). Gramsci was an Italian Marxist who is most famous for his writings in the “[Prison Notebooks](#).”



Gramsci monument in the Bronx

The New York Times [reports](#):

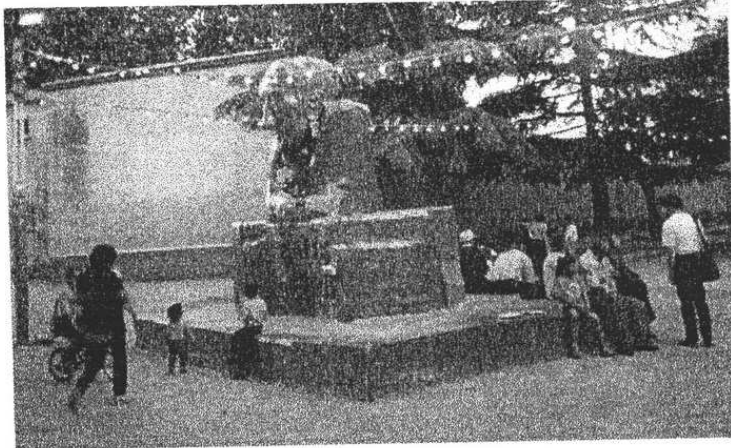
Handmade from plywood, plexiglass and miles of beige packing tape — one of Mr. Hirschhorn’s signature art supplies — the Gramsci Monument bears no resemblance whatsoever to the cenotaphs and glowering statues that dot the rest of New York.

And it doesn’t look much like an artwork, either. It looks more, in fact, like an adult treehouse or a makeshift beach cabana or a chunk of set hijacked from the Kevin Costner film “Waterworld.”

While I was initially critical of some fancy-pants artists coming into a low-income community and paying its resident a measly [\\$12 an hour to build](#) a monument under an artist they’ve never heard, the monument does provide a public space for community members to come, interact and host cultural events. So evil gentrification? Maybe. Awesome community building project? Also maybe.

The monument is temporary, and will be up for 3 months.

Hirschhorn has previously made monuments of Deleuze, Spinoza, and Batailles.



Hirschhorn's Deleuze monument in Avignon.



Hirschhorn's Spinoza monument in Amsterdam.

You can learn more about the monument on [its hideous burns-your-eyes website](#).

## artemporary

Unpretentious Temporary Contemporary Art

### A Swiss Gentleman#in New York

Posted on [July 23, 2013](#) | [Leave a comment](#)



He had a really interesting idea. This idea touches my background and is close to my origins.

Thomas Hirschhorn is apparently a famous contemporary Swiss artist: his works are exhibited at MoMA as well as at Tate Modern, plus obviously many other minor but equally important cultural meccas around the world.

He had this vision of bringing some culture and cultural turmoil to one of the less intellectual area of New York City: the Bronx.

When wandering around the area, scouting for the location of his new project, locals simply thought he was a priest or an eccentric rich gentleman. Indeed, Mr. Hirschhorn's only concern was not about his look, rather about being taken seriously. After attending many housing projects all around NYC, he eventually picked the Forest Houses project in the Morrisania section of the South Bronx.

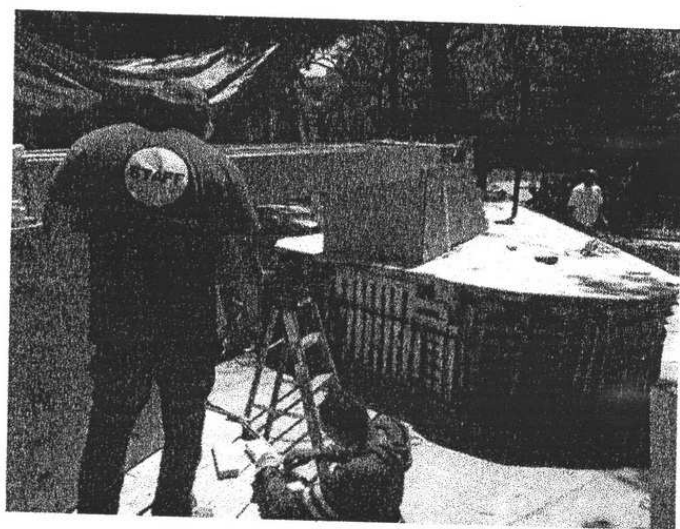
A house has been built in the past few weeks, the Gramsci Monument, and will serve as cultural centre that will animate the summer in this part of the city far from the fanciness of Manhattan.



But why Antonio Gramsci?

A well known Marxist philosopher, Gramsci believed in the power of culture and education to free the "oppressed". And this seems to be in line with Mr. Hirschhorn's philosophy. He told the NY Times:

*"I tell them, 'This is not to serve your community, per se, but it is to serve art, and my reasons for wanting to do these things are purely personal artistic reasons. My goal or my dream is not so much about changing the situation of the people who help me, but about showing the power of art to make people think about issues they otherwise wouldn't have thought about.'"*



So *Artemporary*. So mind-freeing. So simple yet powerful. Love it!

#### **Suggested reading**

Mr. Randy Kennedy has written a beautiful article on the NY Times. A reading I highly recommend.