



Ed Atkins, Haroon Mirza and James Richards, *An Echo Button* (2011), mixed media.
Photo: courtesy of the artists and Lisson Gallery.

MAEVE CONNOLLY

Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology

Artangel and the Changing Mediascape of Public Art

Abstract

This article examines the early history of the Artangel Trust (1985–91), focusing on the use of advertising media such as billboards and outdoor screens in a series of prominently located projects, by artists such as Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, and Les Levine. It also identifies significant shifts in the organization's approach to practices of commissioning, mediation and promotion after 1991, following the appointment of James Lingwood and Michael Morris as co-directors. Instead of simply emphasizing the specific differences between these two incarnations of Artangel, the article draws attention to the altered – and continually changing – relationship between media and concepts of the public sphere in curatorial practice.

Keywords

Artangel
public art
commissioning
advertising media
site-specific art
public sphere
artists' billboards
art and pilgrimage

In March 2011, the London-based arts trust Artangel, directed by James Lingwood and Michael Morris, celebrated its twentieth anniversary by launching the Artangel Collection, a partnership with the Tate to enable the exhibition and production of moving-image works. Reporting on this initiative in *Artforum*, Martin Herbert emphasized both Artangel's reputation for memorable projects, which 'avoid pandering spectacle while remaining attention-grabbing', and the 'tactical thinking' frequently demonstrated by its directors (2011: 111–12). He also cited some of the organization's most celebrated projects: Rachel Whiteread's spectral plaster cast of the interior of an East London house in 1993; Michael Landy's *Break Down* (2001), in which the artist used a machine in a defunct department store to destroy his possessions; and Roger Hiorns's *Seizure* (2008), a crystalline transformation of a South London council flat.

The recent twentieth-anniversary celebration is also significant, however, because it confirms 1991 as the 'official year zero' of the organization's history (Herbert 2011: 111), even though it actually existed in an earlier form for six years, as the Artangel Trust. Founded by Roger Took in 1985, and with John Carson in the role of production director from 1986 until 1991, the Artangel Trust supported almost thirty projects. While Artangel has sought to preserve its own prehistory, most notably in a detailed chronology that forms part of the Artangel publication, *Off Limits: 40 Artangel Projects* (2002), the curatorial agenda developed by Took and Carson has been somewhat overlooked in histories of public art. The twentieth anniversary was marked, for example, by a photo-feature on the website of *The Guardian*, detailing some of the most celebrated projects realized since 1991, and accompanied by an article with the title 'Artangel: Frontline Warriors'. It introduced Lingwood and Morris with the dramatic statement: 'In 1991, two young men decided it was time art broke out of the gallery – and become an event in its own right' (O'Mahony 2011), implying the lack of any precedent. Perhaps more significantly, the early work of Artangel Trust is not discussed in Jane Rendell's (2008) otherwise valuable analysis of 'critical spatial arts practice'.

This article aims to revisit the organization's early years, with particular attention to the curatorial agenda informing the work of Took and Carson from 1985 to 1991, manifest in their approach to the commissioning, mediation and promotion of public artworks. This agenda is theorized through reference to broader debates, primarily in British and American art discourse, regarding the privatization of culture and public space in the 1980s. The Artangel Trust program was marked by a sustained focus on placing art in the context of advertising media, such as billboards and outdoor screens (often located in heavily trafficked urban spaces), in sharp contrast to the strategy developed by Lingwood and Morris. Under their direction, Artangel projects after 1991 tended to involve less visible sites, generally symbolically and physically dissociated from advertising media. Yet while I emphasize these differences, I do not posit a definitive break between the two iterations of Artangel. Instead, I argue that the organization has consistently revised and adapted its curatorial and commissioning strategies (including its approach to mediation and promotion), informed by – and articulating – an evolving conception of public art, particularly with regard to the relationship between media, public space, and the public sphere.

Mediascapes, Cultural Flows and Public Art

Of the 29 projects documented in the *Off Limits* chronology, at least thirteen featured billboards, posters, outdoor screens or other advertising media. This focus on advertising media was also apparent in the work of US organizations such as the Public Art Fund and Creative Time during the 1980s. According to Harriet Senie, artists' billboards flourished in the United States 'before arts funding had dwindled' and many were produced specifically 'in response to growing alarm over the social neglect of the Reagan and Bush administrations and the pervasive stupefying effects of the media'. She emphasizes that billboards were viewed at that time as a

'viable alternative' to other modes of practice, including public sculpture, which was often 'criticized for failing to address public interests', overtly political art in the museum – perceived to be 'neutralized' by this institutional setting – and community projects, which were 'often denigrated as social work' (Senie 1999: 20).

Yet the perceived viability of the billboard as a 'public' artistic medium during this period cannot be fully understood without reference also to the specific role of media, including newspapers, the cinema and broadcasting, in the formation and conception of the public sphere. My approach to the 'mediascape' of public art is informed by Arjun Appadurai's analysis of the 'five dimensions of global cultural flow', developed through reference to the disjunctures and differences produced between 'ethnoscapes', 'technoscapes', 'financescapes', 'mediascapes' and 'ideoscapes' (Appadurai 1990: 296). In this account, meaning is produced through contradiction and dissonance between the 'global' and local, generating a 'complex, overlapping, disjunctive order', which does not conform to centre-periphery models of cultural flow. For Appadurai, 'mediascape' describes both 'the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information' and the 'images of the world created by these media' (Appadurai 1990: 296, 298–99).

In Appadurai's analysis, mediascapes are closely related to (although not wholly interchangeable with) ideoscapes, which are defined as directly political 'concatenations of images'. Ideoscapes typically involve ideologies of states or counter-ideologies, including elements of an enlightenment worldview (associated with ideas of freedom, sovereignty or democracy) and the master-narrative in this worldview is, according to Appadurai, a relationship between reading, representation and the public sphere (1990: 300). But he also makes the point that terms and images associated with these ideologies are no longer held together, and communicative genres (such as newspapers or cinema for example) widely associated with the formation of European public spheres may have a different significance in other contexts. In addition, as Appadurai makes clear, the worlds of commodities, news and politics are 'profoundly mixed' in contemporary mediascapes, with the result that many audiences experience media as an 'interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens and billboards' (1990: 299). This interconnected repertoire creates specific problems of artistic and curatorial agency for practitioners working outside the gallery. My focus on Artangel responds to Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy's call for 'close studies of the spatial specificities of culture and infrastructure', which can address the transformations associated with 'new media' without losing sight of the 'historical depth and spatial reach' of mediascapes (2004: 15). Even though the Artangel Trust focused on media (such as billboards) ubiquitous in urban contexts, these media were often deployed in ways that highlighted cultural differences in the formation and perception of public spheres. This is especially apparent in the reception of projects involving billboard works in Derry and Belfast.

The history of the Artangel Trust can also illuminate the changing role and form of public relations, audience development, and marketing strategies in public art commissioning during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although several Artangel projects were initially presented without an

artistic or organizational credit, they were also mediated through a range of publicity strategies, including previews, features and reviews in the mainstream and specialist press. These mediated forms cannot simply be dismissed as 'secondary' to direct encounters with these artworks. Instead, the term 'mediascape' enables consideration of the relationship between the form of projects utilizing advertising media and their mediation, through promotional and discursive strategies. Finally, the work of the Artangel Trust also provides an important point of reference in understanding the current significance of outdoor screens and billboards, for artists, commissioners and curators.

Privatization, Public Art and Public Space

According to Fay Carey, the formation of both the Artangel Trust and the Public Art Development Trust (a British organization founded in 1984) was shaped by debates around Percent for Art programs, particularly those used in US cities such as Seattle to support urban regeneration (Carey 2008: 109). But, Carey notes, the emergence of arts agencies involving a mix of public and private funding was also a response to anxieties concerning the privatization of culture in Britain, associated with the role of the Conservative government, then in power. By securing a degree of autonomy from state cultural policies through the support of anonymous backers or 'angels', Artangel sought to emphasize artistic freedom while promoting the realization of ambitious temporary public artworks. Roger Took, cited by Ian Hunter in a profile of the organization, specifically emphasized the importance of 'no strings attached' funding offered by anonymous patrons, enabling 'complete political freedom, artistic freedom and the cash to back it up' (Hunter 1987: 23).

Some of the first projects supported by Took and Carson sought to contest the 'privatization' of British culture by engaging with overtly political issues, and by drawing attention to the historical, social and political processes through which iconic urban spaces had been constituted as 'public'. This focus is especially apparent in two projects. *City Projection* (1985) by Krzysztof Wodiczko was devised in conjunction with an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) and Canada House in London, and addressed the history of public space in Britain. It involved projections onto two early nineteenth-century London monuments – the Duke of York Memorial in The Mall and Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square. Wodiczko's project clearly highlights the contradictory character of spaces associated with nationalistic pageantry. As Malcolm Miles has noted, London's grand squares and avenues are not actually sites of 'democratic determination' but rather sites of 'power's display', serving as the scene of militaristic processions, commemorations and even executions (2008: 77). Miles also emphasizes that these sites acquired some of their associations of publicness *retrospectively*, partly in the face of encroaching privatization and, this is a key point, highlighting the fact that 'public space' is not fixed but rather partly defined in terms of its imagined difference from private space at a particular moment. From this perspective, it is possible to see that privatization operates as a complex force, which can help to reconfigure definitions and ideals of public space. This

commission also provided Wodiczko with the opportunity to stage an unannounced but widely reported action, in which an image of a swastika was projected onto the façade of the South African embassy as a critique of apartheid. Anna McCarthy points out that while the projection onto the embassy lasted only two hours, it was 'immortalized in postcards printed after the event' (2001: 239). Yet, even if the Artangel Trust supported and enabled Wodiczko's action, the projection onto the embassy was not promoted in advance and this lack of advance mediation is also apparent in several subsequent works.

Artangel's next project, *Blame God* (1985) by Les Levine, marked the beginning of the Artangel Trust's use of billboards and like *City Projection* it also proved somewhat controversial. By this point, Dublin-born Levine was already known for his provocative use of billboards in the United States (Senie 1999: 23). His Artangel Trust project (like Wodiczko's) was realized in conjunction with an exhibition at the ICA, as part of a series of commissions entitled *Public Works*, curated by Declan McGonagle, previously (and subsequently) director of the Orchard Gallery in Derry. Levine's billboards were presented at various locations in London and devised partly in response to media coverage of conflict in Northern Ireland, the campaign featured slogans such as 'ATTACK GOD' and 'BLAME GOD', together with images of British troops, prison guards, and sectarian groups. Harriet Senie reads Levine's work as a response to the fact that 'the fighting in Northern Ireland' was often referred to as 'a religious war', and she points out that his billboards 'were meant to shock and they did' (1999: 29). This ambiguous (albeit didactic) language drew attention to continuities between advertising and more openly ideological forms of public communication, including political campaigns and displays of religious dogma. So while Levine used billboards to engage with editorial and documentary reportage, his project also highlighted (whether purposefully or inadvertently) the regulatory and industrial practices specific to advertising media.

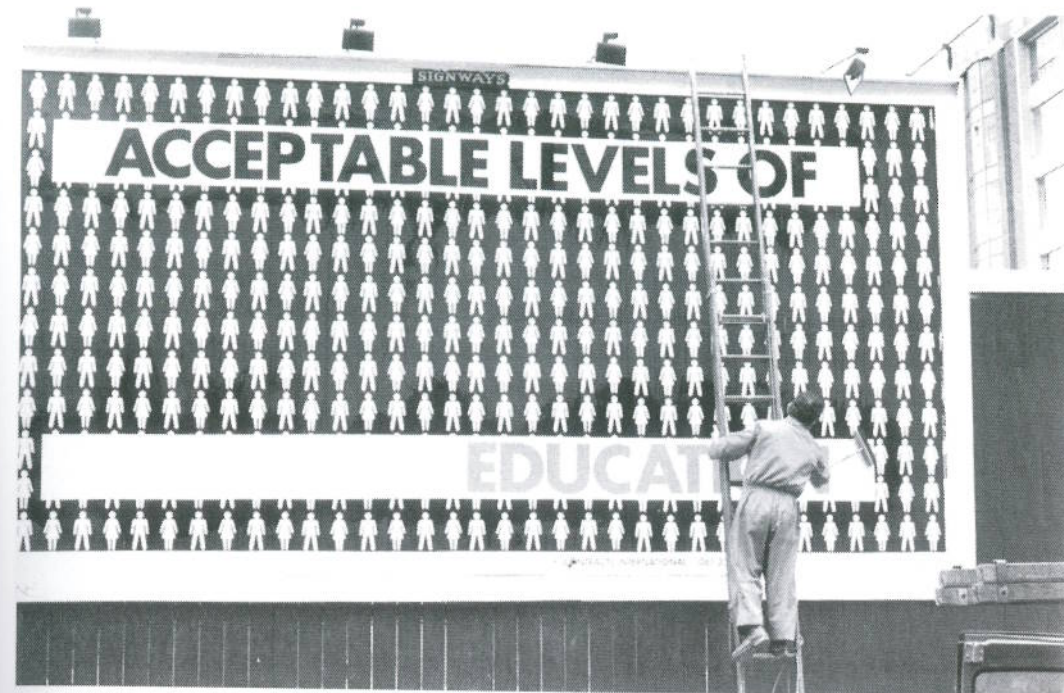
Levine's billboards were intended to appear anonymously, but also to be 'backed up with a publicity campaign where discussion of the work subsequently appeared in the press and on the radio' (Carlisle 1988: 23), but this anonymity proved untenable. Reflecting on the controversy surrounding Levine's billboards in a review from 1985, Michael Archer reconstructed the chain of events that led to the pasting over of several boards by employees. Hoardings were booked by Artangel and the ICA with various companies – including Arthur Maiden Ltd. and London and Provincial – but employees became anxious about the content and pasted over billboards on several sites. Representatives of London and Provincial also claimed (falsely) that they were acting on the advice of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Following legal intervention on the part of Artangel and the ICA, an agreement was reached with these companies, 'over-stickers' attributing responsibility to the ICA were added, and Levine's billboards were reposted. According to Archer, this controversy was 'inevitable' as ASA rules required the identity of advertisers to be known, if their ads were 'likely to arouse "political, religious, social, or aesthetic [*sic*] controversy", which, when you think about it, covers just about every topic you might consider' (1985: 9).

Anonymity and Curatorial Agency

As Levine's project made clear, billboards did not simply function as sites in which to explore the content and form of advertising or its visibility in public life. They also served as contexts in which to examine the role of private agencies in regulating, even censoring, public discourse. Yet, as an organization supported by private (and anonymous) donors, the Artangel Trust often struggled to communicate, and defend, its own 'publicness'. In 1988, John Carson was interviewed at length by the artist Anne Carlisle, and asked to explain the organization's reluctance to disclose its funding sources. Carson responded that even though the Artangel Trust was supported by agencies such as the Arts Council and Greater London Arts, public attention repeatedly focused on the identity of its private contributors and he attributed this to widespread cynicism in the 'era of the Tories' (Carlisle 1988: 19). It is clear, however, that the involvement of private sponsors generated specific problems in the reception of billboard works addressing issues of social and political power, such as Tim Head's *Contracts International* (1986). Head's project was devised for various locations in Manchester, utilizing billboards, newspaper ads, postcards and adverts on buses. The phrase 'ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF', followed by words such as 'CONTAMINATION', 'STARVATION', 'PRIVATISATION', appeared in each context, together with a logo and phone number of a fictitious agency called 'Contracts International'. Those calling the number heard a recorded message inviting them to a public discussion at Manchester Town Hall on the theme of 'The Acceptable Face of Art' (Lingwood and Morris 2002: 223).

Jim Aulich, reviewing this project and the public discussion for *Artists Newsletter*, suggested that Head's use of 'language and imagery redolent of the anonymity [...] of late capitalist bureaucracies' was a 'highly ambiguous gesture'. The general 'feeling from the floor', he concluded, was that the project had 'failed' because it did not attempt to resist, or intervene in, 'dominant' media codes (1987: 22). Aulich also notes that Carson was 'unwilling or unable to account for the sources of Artangel funding beyond that it issues from unnamed individuals', concluding that 'this is a pity since public art serves the interest of those who pay for it, if not as a display of power and wealth then as a form of cultural legitimization' (1987: 22). For Carson, however, the withholding of patrons' names specifically differentiated the Artangel Trust from projects involving corporate sponsorship such as, for example, James Lingwood's *TSWA 3D*. This was an ambitious and critically acclaimed 1987 program of publicly sited temporary artworks by artists such as Kate Whiteford and Richard Wilson (Lingwood 1987; Graham Dixon 1987). Carson recognized it as an important example of art practice in the public realm, noting that 'these works are being seen by a lot of people and consequently [...] companies are beginning to [...] underwrite that type of work'. But he also suggested a direct link between the availability of corporate support and the fact that these particular works were not 'politically contentious' (Carlisle 1988: 20).

While Took and Carson seem to have courted controversy through the initially anonymous presentation of works by Levine and Head, they



Tim Head, *Contracts International* (1986), installation view. Commissioned and produced by Artangel. Photo: John Carson, courtesy Artangel.

consciously sought to develop an 'educational aspect' that would be more 'user-friendly' in their next billboard project (Carlisle 1988: 23). Barbara Kruger's *We Don't Need Another Hero* was clearly credited as an artwork, and appeared simultaneously in fourteen cities across Britain and Ireland, in January and February 1987. The project was also devised to coincide with the broadcast of an episode (entitled 'Sexuality') of the six-part Channel 4 television series *State of the Art* directed by Geoff Dunlop and John Wyver. This episode provided a context for Kruger's practice, through sequences in which the artist communicated her position on the relationship between art and politics, and it also detailed the production of the billboards, which were shown being printed, pasted up and, eventually, pasted over (Bird 1987). So rather than simply fulfilling a promotional role in relation to Kruger's billboard campaign, *State of the Art* encouraged a discussion about the significance and form of the project.

Artangel continued to work with advertising media in projects such as Conrad Atkinson's *Consuming Culture* (1987) a series of poster works located in the London Underground and Tyne and Wear Metro, resembling the front pages of broadsheet finance newspapers such as the *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, but featuring fictitious news relating to connections between art and commerce. Although the project was concerned with commodification, Atkinson mimicked the form of the newspaper editorial, rather than presenting his work as an advertising campaign. In this instance, it was London Transport that perceived a

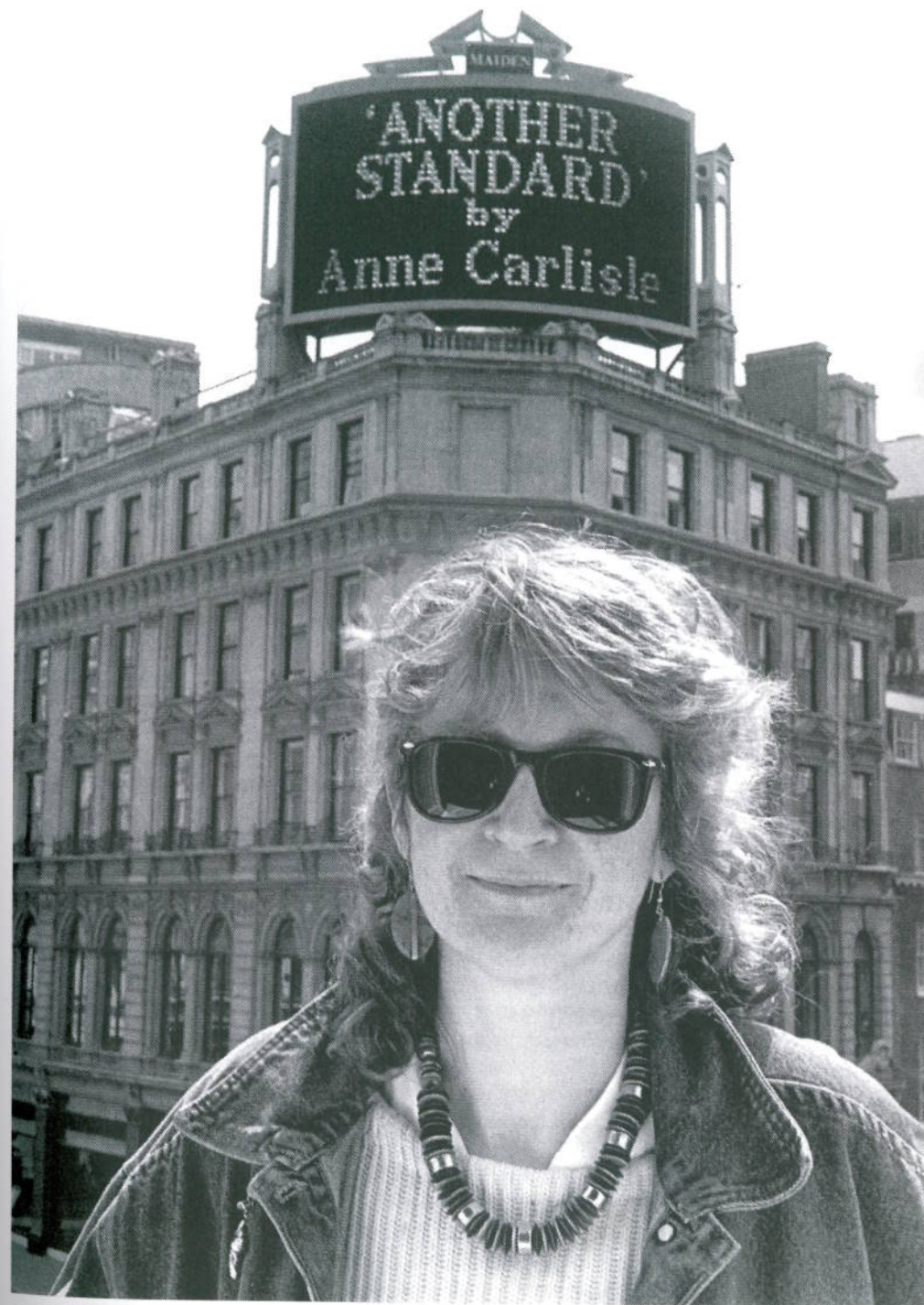
potential difficulty. Commenting on difficulties encountered in its project, Carson noted that several poster spaces booked at Bank tube station (in the financial centre of London) became unavailable at the last minute, and the project only proceeded once letters of permission had been secured from both the *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* (1988: 20).

A second project with Krzysztof Wodiczko was realized in 1988, entitled *Edinburgh Projections* and this time involving images of disenfranchisement (referring to homelessness and drug addiction) on the columns of the unfinished copy of the Parthenon located on Edinburgh's Carlton Hill. This work also included an image of Margaret Thatcher's face, along with the words 'Pax Britannica', projected onto the dome of the nearby City Observatory. When considered in relation to Levine's billboards, *Edinburgh Projections* signalled an ongoing concern with histories of imperialism and struggles over political sovereignty on the part of the Artangel Trust. This critique of the nation as a (contested) political and cultural formation persisted in some of the first projects realized for the Spectacolour outdoor advertising screen located at Piccadilly Circus, but many of the artists commissioned for this context were also attuned to the ways in which the national was being reconfigured in global cultural flows.

Spectacolour and the Spectacularized Urban Mediascape

Spectacolour is a computer-animated display system, then owned by the British outdoor advertising company Arthur Maiden Ltd (now part of the media conglomerate Clear Channel). From 1988 until 1991, Artangel commissioned works for the screen by eight different artists (or artist groups) for the Piccadilly Circus screen: Anne Carlisle, John Fekner, Vera Frankel, Jenny Holzer, Tina Keane, Sitespecific, Jeremy Welsh, and Why Not Associates. These commissions were promoted as the first use of this technology by artists in the British context, with Roger Took stating that 'Spectacolour is a conspicuous example of artists taking current advanced media methods into an art context', emphasizing that the artworld 'has to wake up and take the initiative'. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, given Carson's resistance to corporate sponsorship, Took also underscored the benefits to commercial media companies, stating 'we are bringing them the artists, imaginative visual ideas, and the publicity' (quoted in Buck 1988: 19).

Several artists commissioned for Spectacolour approached Piccadilly Circus as a heavily trafficked, spectacularized visual environment. For example, Anne Carlisle drew attention to the circulation of nationalistic emblems as consumer goods in the nearby souvenir shops. Her work, *Another Standard* (1988), featured animated transformations of the Union Jack – an image dominating the souvenir shops around Piccadilly Circus, 'exploring the connotations of this all-too-familiar image on the Mainland and in Carlisle's native Belfast, where there is no possibility of a neutral presentation of the British flag' (Buck 1988: 19). The animated flag was continually transformed, turning into a hammer, a hand making a salute, a scissors, and the blades of a helicopter. Other artists focused more explicitly on practices of consumption, and John Fekner, who had come to



Anne Carlisle, Another Standard (1988), installation view. Commissioned and produced by Artangel. Photo: Harry Chambers, courtesy of Artangel.

prominence as a street artist in the United States, used hieroglyphics as a reference in his work *Slaves of Labour* (1988).

Earlier projects involving billboards and posters, such as Levine's *Blame God*, Tim Head's *Contracts International* and Atkinson's *Consuming Culture*, tended to envisage advertising as operating within a system of signs that included information, in the form of national news media, public communications and even religious dogma. But, through its collaboration with Spectacolour, Artangel projects began to articulate a more direct relationship to global flows of people and capital. While the billboard works could be viewed as self-contained still images (albeit encountered alongside their commercial counterparts on city streets) the projects on Spectacolour were wholly integrated into the advertising cycle. As time-based works, they could only be viewed between advertisements for products and services, often by globally recognizable brand names such as British Airways and Fiat. So they were symbolically inserted into a larger cultural economy, organized around linkages between London and 'global' cities such as New York and Tokyo, and equally spectacularized urban spaces such as Times Square and Shibuya.

Spectacolour technology was not specific to Piccadilly Circus, a fact emphasized by the commissioning of Jenny Holzer's *Messages* (1988–89), one of the most ambitious Artangel Trust projects involving Spectacolour. By the late 1980s, Holzer was already widely known for her use of computerized outdoor screens, particularly as a consequence of a high-profile project produced by the New York-based Public Art Fund for a Spectacolour screen in Times Square. She had been one of several artists commissioned by the Public Art Fund to produce text-based or simple graphic images, integrated into the advertising cycle and announced on screen as 'messages to the public'. In London, Holzer's Artangel project was timed to coincide with the 1988 Christmas shopping season, and in keeping with strategies she had employed elsewhere, her 'messages' were disseminated across multiple platforms. They included not only the Piccadilly Circus Spectacolour and other outdoor screens in Belfast and Plymouth, but also video monitors in Leicester Square tube station, MTV 'artbreak' broadcasts, and cash till receipts issued in Virgin record shops.

While the proliferation of large screens in urban spaces is considered by some theorists to exemplify the privatization of public life, and the reduction of the city to image (Virilio 1994: 64), outdoor advertising is not a new addition to urban space. As Elena Gorfinkel points out, Times Square in particular has 'long served as the transportation nexus of the city, with its density of converging subway lines' while also signalling the city 'as a profoundly spectacularized cash nexus, the place where commerce, labor, traffic and exchange turned into a flashing tapestry of entertainment and spectacle' (2011: 62). During the first half of the twentieth century, Times Square became the scene of ever more ambitious modes of publicity, including animated advertising 'spectaculars' by designers such as Douglas Leigh, which generated publicity by seizing the attention of passersby and disrupting flows of traffic (Moana Thompson 2012).

Times Square also figures prominently in Anna McCarthy's seminal 2001 study of visual cultural and public space, *Ambient Television*, which

offers a persuasive counterpoint to journalistic and academic accounts that either demonize or uncritically celebrate television's presence in public space:

The effects of television's presence in places other than the home are not reducible to 'the privatization of public space,' as some might argue. This is because public spaces are not purely and self-evidently public; they are, like every other cultural space, characterized by particular configurations of public and private. Indeed, what makes the public/private division such a major category of social power is the fact that it is dynamic and flexible, varying from place to place.

(McCarthy 2001: 121)

McCarthy goes on to identify Times Square as 'arguably the most televisual public square in North America' and she theorizes an economy of attention and distribution in which the boundaries between shopping environments such as the Virgin Megastore and the square are very deliberately blurred though the placement and programming of screens, in order to produce what she terms a 'carnavalesque sense of competing spectacles' (2001: 144). Holzer's Artangel Trust project, *Messages*, clearly embraced this environment, emphasizing the contingent and contradictory publicness of Piccadilly Circus through the exploration of disparate media, ranging from London Underground video monitors to cash till receipts.

For audiences encountering this project in other urban contexts, however, the experience may have been different. In Belfast, for example, Holzer's 'messages' were presented on two electronic display boards overlooking Shaftesbury Square, installed above a branch of Northern Bank and Zakks hair salon. A review of this work in *Circa* likened the imperative tone of Holzer's phrases (such as 'HIDING YOUR MOTIVES IS DESPICABLE') to 'political and advertising campaign slogans' (Odling-Smee 1989: 36). But the reviewer also drew attention to parallels with the tone of painted quotations from the Bible, such as those publicly displayed in the 'lanes of Armagh'. Here, the reviewer is referring to the relatively common practice in Northern Ireland of using walls (as well as occasional billboards) to display religious messages that operate in a disjunctive relationship to advertising discourse, articulating a highly conservative model of the public sphere.

Promoting Public Art

Artangel's use of Spectacolour coincided with, and might be said to articulate, a shift in the conception of public art as a time-based form. Reflecting upon developments in public art, including Holzer's New York project for Times Square (in 1982), Patricia C. Phillips identified a growing awareness of temporality in US public art. She cited various projects by Creative Time and the Public Art Fund, in which the site is a constant but artworks 'come and go' (1989: 334). She proposed that 'public life has become emblematic not of what is shared by a constituency but of

the restless, shifting differences that compose and enrich it. Public life is both startlingly predictable and constantly surprising [...] invented and re-created by each generation' (1989: 331). Emphasizing a 'deliberate ambiguity between the art moment and the ad, between the aesthetic-political agenda and the pitch to the consumer', her article suggests a link between the temporal rhythms of advertising and the 'texture' of public life. Like McCarthy, she seemed to understand public space as conflictual, arguing in favour of publicly sited works that could address 'the dynamic, temporal conditions of the collective', rather than taking publicness for granted, by imagining it to be found 'out of doors, or in some identifiable civic space' (Phillips 1989: 332, 334).

When Phillips refers to the 'deliberate ambiguity between the art moment and the ad, between the aesthetic-political agenda and the pitch to the consumer', she seems to suggest that the interweaving of the two is productive precisely because it captures a sense of the conflictual character of public space. But as she is primarily interested in the differences between temporary and permanently situated work, Phillips does not examine the forms of publicity that typically go hand in hand with the commissioning of temporary public artworks. I am using the term 'publicity' here to describe press releases, invitation cards, and print advertising, originated by organizations such as the Artangel Trust, in addition to editorial coverage of projects generated in the form of previews, interviews and reviews, as well as discursive events (such as the symposium organized as part of Tim Head's *Contracts International* project). The ostensibly ambiguous relationship between the 'art moment' and the advertisement – which Phillips sees as integral to the success of public art on Spectacolour in New York – cannot be dissociated from these forms of publicity, which serve to frame the 'art moment' (for some constituencies at least) as an event.

One of the ways in which this framing occurs is simply through the involvement of a named commissioning organization or agency. It is worth recalling that several early Artangel Trust projects were anonymous, but Took and Carson subsequently changed their approach, perhaps informed by critical responses to the works by Levine and Head. In the interview from 1988, Carson alludes to visitor surveys – which seem to have been conducted somewhat informally (and are not included in Artangel production files from 1985 to 1991) – and he indicates that the billboard works were not always recognized by those who saw them as 'artworks' (Carlisle 1988: 23). These projects long preceded the widespread deployment of social media, which has resulted in a much more networked model of audience development in public art, enabling even small-scale arts organizations to routinely gather and more effectively deploy audience data. In the late 1980s, however, the Artangel Trust actually sought Arts Council support to conduct 'market research' that could inform the development of a project, titled 'Multiracial UK', intended to address issues of race and representation within the British context.

The market research does not seem to have been undertaken simply as a means of building audiences for public art; instead, it was intended to support curatorial engagement with specific issues, because 'as an essentially white organization', the Artangel Trust needed greater

knowledge of the issues affecting black and minority ethnic communities in Britain, in order to develop an informed 'constructive debate' (Carlisle 1988: 24). This research led directly to the development of Keith Piper's *Chanting Heads* (1988), a group of four sculptural heads incorporating loudspeakers and mounted on the back of a customized lorry trailer that toured to seventeen locations in Britain and 'broadcast a collage of speech, songs and chants, exploring elements which link the struggles of Black and Third World peoples around the globe' (Lingwood and Morris 2002: 225). This project also drew upon regional networks already established through the production of Kruger's *We Don't Need Another Hero*, and it was framed by Carson as an example of the new and 'challenging issue based work' that the organization hoped to support, in an interview that ended with a call for artists to engage by submitting proposals (Carlisle 1988: 24).

With the change of directorship in 1991, and the arrival of Lingwood and Morris, many of the initiatives and approaches developed by the Artangel Trust – including the partnership with Arthur Maiden Ltd and Spectacolour – came to an end. In addition, by this point, it was proving difficult to secure publicity for Spectacolour projects. The files from 1985 to 1991 include copies of several letters from Carson addressed to James M. Clark at the Public Art Fund in the United States, confirming that the two organizations were in regular communication about their program, and in a letter dated 1 May 1990 Carson mentions the difficulty of regenerating media interest in Spectacolour. The published bibliography for



Barbara Kruger, *We Don't Need Another Hero* (1987), installation view. Commissioned and produced by Artangel. Photo: John Carson, courtesy of Artangel.

Anne Carlisle's *Another Standard* – the first project for the Piccadilly Circus screen – lists an extensive range of articles and reviews, in both specialist and mainstream publications such as *The Face*, *The Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *City Limits* and *Circa*. But only one text is cited in the bibliography relating to the final project for Spectacolour, *This is Your Messiah Speaking* by Vera Frenkel in 1990–91 (Lingwood and Morris 2002: 229). In addition, some reviews and critical histories of these projects entirely overlooked the involvement of the Artangel Trust as commissioner. For example, a *Circa* review in 1988 discussed 'The Jenny Holzer Project' presented in Belfast without any reference to the involvement of the Artangel Trust (Odling-Smee 1989). Harriet Senie's discussion of Les Levine's *Blame God* also fails to acknowledge the involvement of any organization other than the ICA in this work (Senie 1999: 29).

Pilgrimage and Practiced Places

With the arrival of Lingwood and Morris, a new approach to commissioning and publicity gradually became apparent, as press information often highlighted an intrinsic relationship between the form and content of the artwork and its site. Many of the projects developed by the organization after 1991 were also devised to be experienced in locations that were physically bounded or less readily accessible than, for example, monuments or outdoor screens in heavily trafficked urban centres, instead requiring audiences to deviate from their usual routes and routines. Perhaps informed by the experience of projects such as *TSWA 3D*, Lingwood and Morris developed an approach that often involved working on a long-term basis with artists, sometimes exploring recurring themes, such as 'austere approaches to memory' (Herbert 2011: 111). Reflecting upon their approach in *Off-Limits*, Lingwood and Morris also emphasize the collaborative aspect of their approach to site, noting that 'place or location, whether a natural or architectural environment has always emerged at different points' in the development process; sometimes, it is a starting point and sometimes it remains 'abstract until very late' (quoted in Craig-Martin et al. 2002: 11). Many of these works seem to have been addressed to a viewer conceived not as a tourist, a distracted consumer or purposeful commuter, but rather constituted in the role of a 'pilgrim', a notion that surfaces in Claire Bishop's contribution to *Off Limits: 40 Artangel Projects*.

Reflecting upon rituals that shape the experience of art outside the gallery, Bishop likens the journey towards an Artangel project to a 'pilgrimage' and also suggests that advance preparations, such as sourcing directions and maps, generate a 'quasi-cinematic charge' (2002: 25). Bishop's alignment of site-specific art with notions of pilgrimage is important because it indicates that the symbolic value of art often continues to be linked to its dissociation from more 'everyday' forms of visual culture. Her allusion to the 'quasi-cinematic' evokes an experience of time and space that has traditionally been understood to involve symbolic (and often material) separation from rhythms and routines of daily life. It could be argued that pilgrimage is also a feature of many forms of cultural consumption. Nicky Couldry (2000), for example,

has used the term 'media pilgrims' to describe fans of the British soap opera *Coronation Street* who undertake journeys to Manchester in order to be physically present in the place where it was filmed. From 1988 to 1999, fans of the show could even visit Granada Studios and walk down the 'street' itself in the studio's theme park tour, have a drink in the 'pub', and buy *Coronation Street* souvenirs. Interestingly, the figure of the pilgrim, in search of a meaningful and even spiritual encounter with art, has also been highlighted by curators of the multi-part exhibition and research project *Play Van Abbe* (2009–11) at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, an exploration of changing relationships between collections, institutions and audiences.

In Bishop's text, however, the term 'pilgrimage' is used more casually, to describe a self-directed journey conducted in an unfamiliar city or district. Her reference to the 'quasi-cinematic charge' produced by rituals of preparation can also be understood in relation to the specific form of several Artangel projects realized after 1991, which referenced the architecture of cinema or involved screening events. For example, Melanie Counsell's 1993 project *Coronet Cinema* was a sculptural film and sound installation at a disused London cinema that had once been a music hall, while Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 4* (1994) was shown at a functioning movie theatre. Several years later, in 2002, Steve McQueen's *Carib's Leap/Western Deep* was installed in the Lumière, a disused subterranean cinema stripped of its décor to leave only a concrete shell. McQueen's project, with Amna Malik describing it as 'suitably Benjaminian in its relentless pursuit of outmoded spaces to the extent that most people, Londoners and tourists alike, walked past it' (2003: 12).

By this time, several Artangel projects had been presented in many locations that, if not actually hidden underground, were characterized by low visibility or relatively limited public accessibility. So, for example, Gabriel Orozco's *Empty Club* (1996) gave visitors access to the Devonshire Club, a meeting space for 'gentlemen' from the 1820s to the 1960s; and in 1998 Augusto Boal's *The Art of Legislation* took place at the former Greater London Council Debating Chamber. During the decade that followed, Artangel continued to bring audiences into spaces that, even if centrally located, had a somewhat hidden quality. In the projects by Orozco and Boal, it is possible to identify continuities with the critique of power articulated in Wodiczko's *City Projections*. But in general these later works articulate a very different engagement with the urban mediascape than that manifested in the Artangel Trust billboard and Spectacolour works. Kutlug Ataman's *Küba* (2005), for example, was housed in the former postal sorting office in central London, an environment once busy with hundreds of workers, transformed for the duration of the project into a quasi-domestic viewing space.

Ataman's installation incorporated 40 old television monitors, each placed in front of a single armchair, suggesting an array of miniature domestic spaces. Each monitor displayed a different video monologue by a resident of Küba, an area of Istanbul that (according to the press release) has been 'home to nonconformists of diverse ethnicity, religion and political persuasion united in their defiant disregard for state control' since the 1960s. With its display of antiquated TV sets, this installation seemed



Kutlug Ataman, *Küba* (2005), installation view. Commissioned and produced by Artangel. Photo: courtesy of Artangel.

to confirm Artangel's dissociation from new and innovative technologies. The choice of the sorting office as the site also exemplified the appeal of physical (and institutional) spaces associated with older communications media – in this instance, the postal system.

Some theorists (focusing on projects realized after 1991) have suggested that Artangel's approach to site offers a counterpoint to the logics of differentiation, deterritorialization and disjuncture that tend to characterize the global cultural economy. For example, Jane Rendell distinguishes between Artangel's models of site-specificity and the dynamic critiqued by Miwon Kwon, in *One Place After Another* (2004), whereby locational art practices fix place as *specific* in ways that intensify rather than contest the logic of differentiation. Drawing on de Certeau's notion of 'space as a practiced place', and also on Doreen Massey's understanding of place as 'unfixed, contested, multiple' (quoted in Rendell 2008: 35), Rendell suggests that Artangel projects involve the 'practicing' of places. She argues that, through their approach to space and site, works such as Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* and Michael Landy's *Break Down* (both from 2001) can be understood to,

as Massey might put it, "'unfix" places' (2008: 51). It is true that the projects by McQueen and Ataman both deploy disused London buildings as sites in which to present experiences of very different spaces – such as South African gold mines or the homes of Kurdish people in Istanbul. But I am not convinced that these particular Artangel projects 'unfix' place in precisely the sense argued by Rendell, particularly when they are understood in the light of what Appadurai terms the 'fetishism' of locality and production in the global cultural economy. Appadurai argues that locality, both in the narrow sense of 'the local factory or site of production' and in the expanded sense of the nation-state, 'becomes a fetish which disguises globally dispersed forces that actually drive the production process' (1990: 307). This intertwining of locality and production resonates with the widespread repurposing of former industrial spaces of production and distribution as sites for the display of artworks. Viewed from this perspective, the temporary repurposing of postal communications infrastructure in Ataman's *Küba* suggests a fascination with (and perhaps the fetishization of) an earlier economy of production. Following Appadurai's terminology and logic, physical proximity to industrial infrastructure might function as a 'fetish which disguises' global economic flows and forces, in contrast to the overt emphasis on the spectacularized urban mediascape apparent in many earlier Artangel Trust projects.

Echoes of Public Art

The history of Artangel communicates a sense of the complex mediascapes produced through disjunctures in global cultural flows, and the role played by media in conceptualizations of the public sphere. Through its commissioning and promotional practices, the Artangel Trust sought to question the history and form of public culture and space. It is clear that Took and Carson did not approach public space as a fixed or neutral category; in fact, several of the early projects actually focused on the symbolic (and material) violence implicit in the production of prominent national monuments and public squares. So rather than attempting to recover or restore public spaces that had been subject to privatization, Artangel Trust commissions tended to question these categorizations. But the organization also struggled at times to assert its own status *as* public, because of its funding structures and initial emphasis on anonymity.

Although I have emphasized differences between the two incarnations of Artangel, with regard to the use of advertising media, the role of site, and strategies of publicity, it is also important to acknowledge continuities. Perhaps the most important connection between the pre- and post-1991 versions lies in an ongoing capacity for change. While many of the first Artangel Trust projects were concerned with the nation as a contested cultural formation, the partnership with Spectacolour seemed to mark a more explicit engagement with the temporal rhythms of advertising, emphasizing global flows of media and capital. It is also possible to identify strategic change under Lingwood and Morris's direction. While the social and physical architecture of cinema was important in several projects from the 1990s, the following decade witnessed

a number of collaborations between Artangel and broadcasters, especially Channel 4, including projects such as Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), Penny Woolcock's *Exodus* (2007), and Alan Kane's *Life Class: Today's Nude* (2009). More recently, the launch of the Artangel Collection in partnership with the Tate might be said to mark another shift in Artangel's function and form, since it confirms the importance of the museum as a cultural institution and a repository for public art. As Herbert notes, the Tate already owns seven moving image works commissioned by Artangel and, under the terms of the new agreement, nine others will be donated to the museum and the two organizations will collaborate on the realization of five new film and video projects. In this latest venture, the museum operates within an expansive production and distribution network, rather than serving as a setting in which to display 'public art'.

Billboards and outdoor screens continue to attract the attention of artists and curators, as evidenced by two relatively recent Los Angeles exhibitions: *How Many Billboards?*, by the MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House (2010); and *Women in the City* (2008), curated by Emi Fontana and incorporating screen-based works by Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger (James 2009: 67). But the significance of these media – with regard to conceptions of 'public' and 'private' space – has changed, not least as a consequence of the proliferation of newer, and typically more personalized, advertising strategies. A sense of this altered context is articulated in a collaborative work from 2011, which engaged with Times Square as a spectacularized urban media environment and iconic site for public art. Entitled *An Echo Button*, this project was realized for Performa 2011 by three British artists: Ed Atkins, Haroon Mirza, and James Richards. Described in the Performa press release (2011) as 'a project for Times Square that responds to the history and the spectacle of the site', it was curated by Silvia Sgualdini and produced in partnership with the Lisson Gallery (where Sgualdini is an associate director) and the Zabludowicz Collection, with support from the Times Square Alliance.

The project was sponsored by Toshiba, who donated air time on two screens on Times Square for four nights (8–11 November 2011) and it incorporated several elements that connected Times Square to the Zabludowicz Collection, located on the 33rd floor of 1500 Broadway. So, for example, audio was transmitted in real time from the Max Neuhaus sound work *Times Square*, first installed in 1977 (at the north end of the pedestrian island located at Broadway between 45th and 46th Streets), removed in 1992 and then reinstated in 2002. The transmission included both the Neuhaus work itself and ambient audio from its immediate environment. A loop of computer-generated images by Ed Atkins was also displayed for 45 minutes (each evening) on two huge Toshiba video screens, visible in the Square and from the galleries of the Zabludowicz Collection.

Within the galleries, visitors encountered a video edited by Richards and Atkins, projected on a small screen, and a selection of vintage radio receivers dating from the 1930s to the 1960s. Three energy-saving light bulbs hanging from cords, near the radios, were activated live by Haroon Mirza

during an hour-long performance each night, generating interference with the static sound emitted by the receivers, and Mirza also manipulated a sculpture, consisting of speakers, crystal vases, and LEDs, to produce other sounds. So although *An Echo Button* was structured around multiple live elements, including audio and video 'transmission', radio interference and performance, it also emphasized the persistence of sounds and images over time, suggesting a parallel between acoustic resonance and cultural memory. These concerns were made explicit in the Performa press release (2011), which described the installation 'as an "echo chamber" for the videos in Times Square'. By establishing a live transmission link between the visually unspectacular Neuhaus sound work and the dramatic high-rise location of the Zabludowicz Collection, the project alluded both to the history of public art in Times Square and the role of real estate in articulating social status. While *An Echo Button* alluded to the history of public art commissioning, its form communicated a symbolic and physical distance from this earlier mode of practice. Rather than seeking to attract the attention of passersby by utilizing commercial channels of communication, the project instead situated the outdoor video screen in relation to older media such as radio, as though mass advertising might now be experienced – like other outmoded cultural technologies – as an object of detached fascination. So the 'mass' address of billboards and outdoor screens seemed to be valued because it evoked an earlier configuration of public space.

In closing, the early history of the Artangel Trust does not reveal a radical break between the two incarnations of this organization. Instead, it points toward a succession of important and ongoing shifts in practices of commissioning, mediation and promotion, highlighting the changing relationship between media and concepts of the public sphere informing practices of curating in the public realm. In the late 1980s, artists working with the Artangel Trust amplified the formal characteristics of advertising media, encountered in spectacularized urban spaces, in order to explore the texture and rhythm of public life. But the form of more recent works, such as *An Echo Button*, would seem to suggest that the context of reception and the cultural significance of spectacularized urban spaces has altered significantly, to the extent that advertising media such as outdoor screens and billboards might now require visual and acoustic amplification in their own right, so that they can once again be temporarily imagined as public.

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Contributor Details

Maeve Connolly is a lecturer in the Faculty of Film, Art & Creative Technologies at Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Dublin, where she teaches courses on visual culture and art practice. Her publications include *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen* (2009), contributions to *Afterall*, *Afterimage*, *Artforum*, *MIRAJ*, *Screen* and *The Velvet Light Trap*, and catalogue essays on the work of various artists, including Bik Van der Pol, Gerard Byrne, Phil Collins and Jesse Jones. She is currently completing the book *TV Museum: Contemporary Art and the Age of Television*.

Contact: Faculty of Film, Art & Creative Technologies, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

E-mail: maeve@maeveconnolly.net

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