

# THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT.

## NEWSPAPER

Editors:  
LAKESHA BRYANT  
and  
SAQUAN SCOTT

"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)



www.gramsci-monument.com

July 29th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

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

WE ARE INTERNATIONALLY  
KNOWN !!!!

28

Art contemporain

Le Temps  
Samedi Culturel  
Samedi 1 juin 2013



Thomas Hirschhorn avec des habitants de Forest Houses. Quinze chômeurs participent à la construction du monument, dont l'ambition est de faire revivre la pensée du révolutionnaire italien Antonio Gramsci.

## Thomas Hirschhorn, révolutionnaire à New York

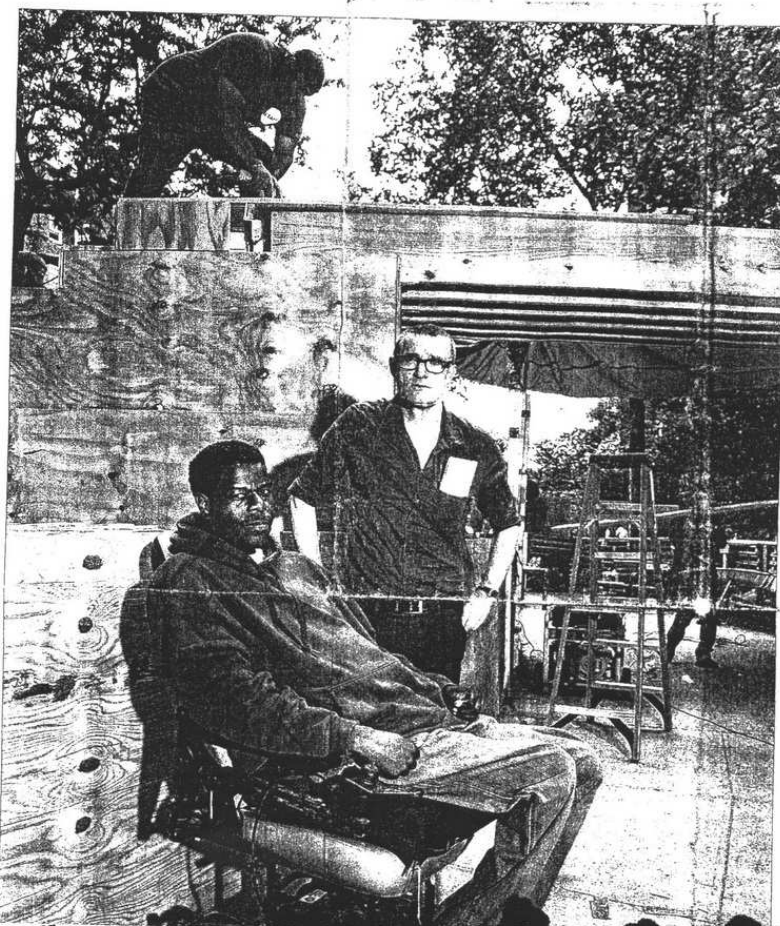
L'artiste suisse construit avec des habitants du Bronx un monument dédié à Antonio Gramsci, penseur marxiste

Par Stéphane Bussard, New York

Entre plusieurs HLM de briques rouges datant de 1956, au cœur d'un parc arborisé, des résidents afro-américains portent un t-shirt rouge qui intrigue: «Gramsci Monument/staff». Longiligne, coiffé d'un casque de chantier blanc et portant une chemise bleue froissée, Thomas Hirschhorn fait soudain irruption. Il lève vite le mystère. Depuis une quinzaine de jours, l'artiste contemporain suisse, basé à Paris, réalise une œuvre dédiée au penseur et révolutionnaire italien Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) dans ce quartier défavorisé du Southeast Bronx. Deux podiums montés à l'aide de palettes et reliés par un pont ont déjà été érigés. Les matériaux utilisés sont le reflet de l'humilité hirschhornienne: bon marché et d'usage quotidien.

### Du rap, des perceuses et des scies

Il n'est que 10h du matin, mais un haut-parleur crache déjà une musique qui sert de liant social dans le quartier: du rap. En quelques minutes, la place prend l'allure d'un grand chantier. Perceuses, scies, visseuses. Chacun connaît sa partition. Thomas Hirschhorn ne dirige pas. Il se contente de créer une dynamique. Un



*Paul  
Erik  
Farmer  
Salvatore  
Dove*

tellement important. Car ici à Forest Houses, il s'y passe des choses belles et moins belles. Le projet du Gramsci Monument permet d'occuper des gens sans emploi qui paient entre 300 et 400 dollars pour un trois-pièces. Quand on est à Forest Houses, on y reste. Et ceux qui quittent n'ont pas les moyens de rester à New York. Ils vont ailleurs. Le responsable de l'association des résidents souhaite à son tour développer des projets estivaux dans la même veine, à commencer par un événement sur l'histoire de l'Afrique-Amérique. «Je crois que l'artiste ne réalise pas ce qu'il fait pour le quartier. Nous n'avons plus peur d'entreprendre», souligne Erik Farmer, qui se souvient de sa première rencontre avec Hirschhorn: «Je n'avais compris que la moitié de ce qu'il disait. Aujourd'hui, je saisis le personnage et son œuvre.»

### Une œuvre précaire mais gravée dans la mémoire

Le site du Gramsci Monument est un espace public. L'occuper est la quintessence de l'engagement artistique de Thomas Hirschhorn. Une manière de refuser de se retrouver avec un public exclusif, un risque parfois encouru en

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Bronx, NY 10456

Monday

Chance of Showers



84 °F | °C

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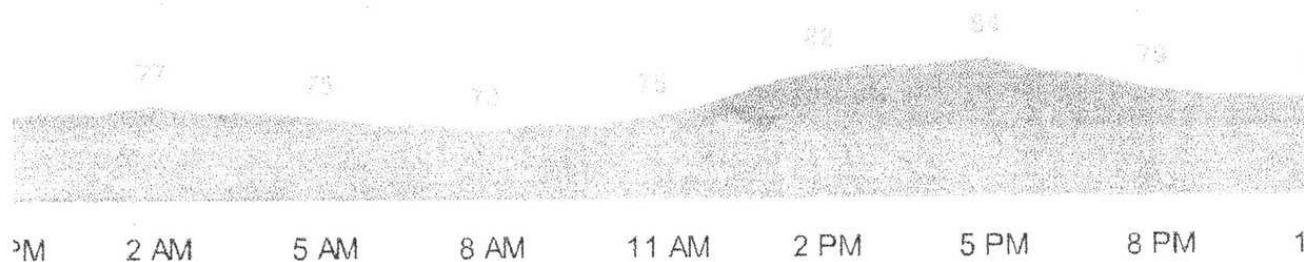
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Precipitation

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## Gramsci Comes to The Bronx: Too Little and Too Late

JERRY KRASE (July 8, 2013)



Jerry Krase

Still waiting for Antonio Gramsci in Belmont.

Whereas Jesus Christ stopped at Eboli on his way elsewhere and has yet to make a confirmed appearance anywhere in the bailiwick of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, I am happy to report that the ironically Christ-like radical Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, has finally made it to The Bronx; but only by way of Switzerland.

Whereas Jesus Christ stopped at Eboli on his way elsewhere and has yet to make a confirmed appearance anywhere in the bailiwick of Cardinal Timothy Dolan (FYI: The Bronx is part of the Archdiocese of New York and Dolan is in **deep stuff** (*profondo stoff*), I am happy to report that the much more Christ-like radical Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, has finally arrived, but only by way of Switzerland.

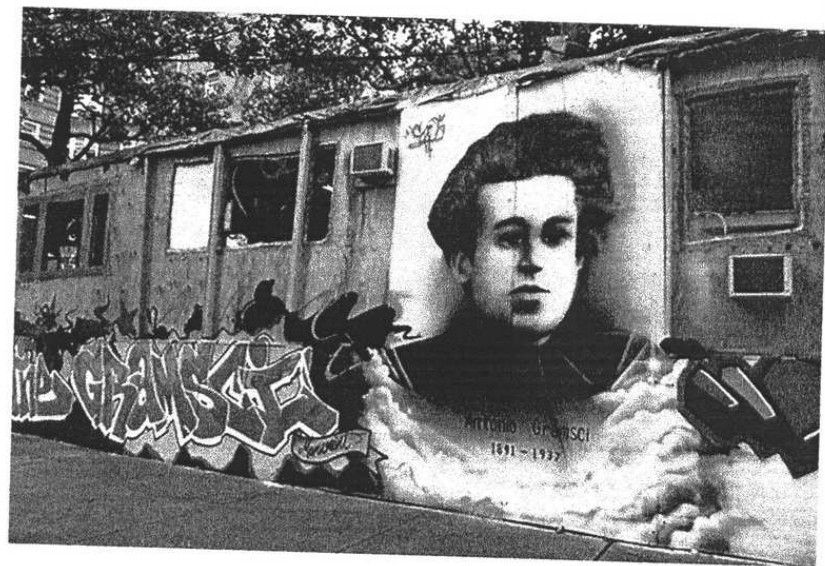
In a recent *New York Times* article, **Randy Kennedy** cryptically remarked “Last year a tall man in a dark suit with thick black-frame glasses — something like a combination of Morrissey and Samuel Beckett — began showing up at housing projects all over New York City. He attended residents’ meetings and spoke rapturously in a heavy Germanic accent about an improbable dream (*un sogno improbabile*): finding people to help him build a monument to the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who died in Rome in 1937. “No one knew who the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn, or Gramsci for that matter was.

Hirschhorn's Gramscianesque focus is on “oppression, poverty, abuse of power, the atrocities of war, and a culture of easy pleasure that makes it easy to ignore all those things.”

His plywood, plexiglass and beige packing tape monument to Gramsci “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*” according to Kennedy. This summer (*Quest'estate*) it will serve as a site for lectures, concerts, recitals and art programs at the one time crack-infected Forest Houses. It is the final installation in a series that spans the Atlantic to Holland, France and Germany. In Gramscian style, they were collaboratively created in poor and working class housing projects to show the power of art “... to make people think about issues they otherwise wouldn’t have thought about.”

A long-time resident activist Kennedy interviewed, Mr. Farmer, 43, who was one of the few to ask for Gramsci’s writings, remarked “There’s nothing cultural here at all. It’s like we’re in a box here, in this neighborhood.” An apt description of most insular enclaves. During a work break, a young man was being chased by people shouting that he had just robbed someone (*appena derubato qualcuno*). when they caught him they beat him severely. “I’m sorry you had to see that, but it’s self-policing, and that’s how that should work,” Farmer said; “That guy doesn’t live here. He’s not going to come back here and try to rob anybody anymore.” Note how well this would’ve sounded in Italian or in the good old days of Bensonhurst.

It is important to note that the monument is not situated on Arthur Avenue in Belmont’s not really “The Real Little Italy,” which instead has a monument to Crazy Joe Gallo in the form

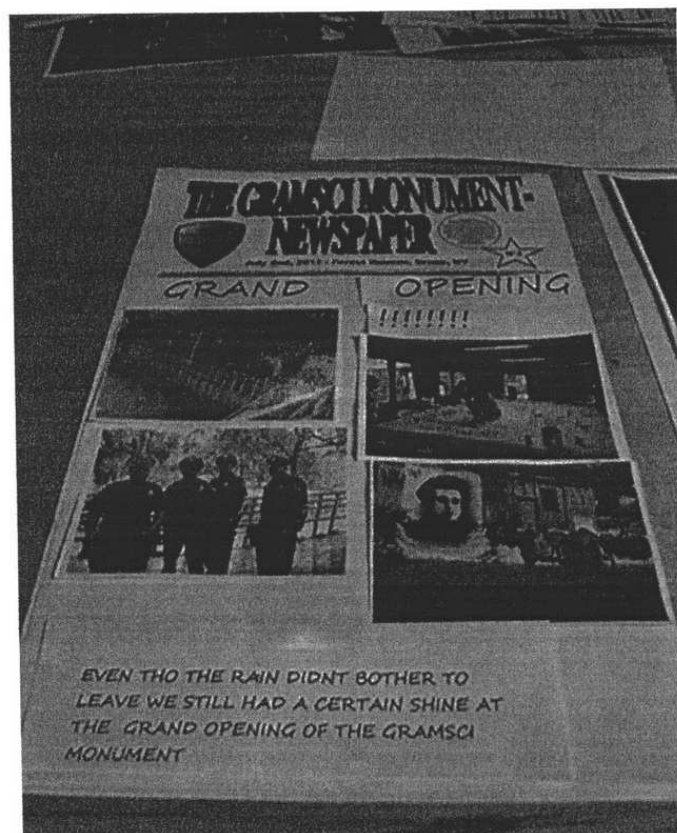


of a facsimile of Umberto's Clam House where on April 7, 1972 he was shot and killed two months after its opening in Manhattan's authentic Little Italy ethnic theme park. So far the **Belmont Business Improvement District** hasn't found the nerve to mount a statue of Bronx-born John Gotti. Of course real Italians have made many great contributions via the Bronx; especially in the arts such as my old and new friends Ralph Fasabella, Joseph Tusiani, and Annie Lanzilotto. Then there is Ron Galella, Don DeLillo, and a whole slew of actors acting like Italian-Americans from The Bronx: Al Pacino, Chazz Palmentieri, and Danny Aiello. Spanning the music spectrum (*attraversando lo spettro musicale*) are Dion (and the Belmonts) Dimucci and Arturo Toscanini, not to mention Jake Lamotta whose bell was rung too often. But as to recent progressive politics and activism there is much left to be desired Italian-wise in the Bronx.

In preparation for this commentary, I asked a few unacademic Italian American friends if they knew who Antonio Gramsci was and was not shocked by the lack of name recognition (*nome riconoscimento*). Despite their common origins (at least the Sardinians among them), Bronx-Italians especially might be unfamiliar with Gramsci, so in searching for a short précis on the revolutionary activist-scholar I found this *Monthly Review* review of Antonio A. Santucci's recent biography that I will translate into plain American shortly:

"Gramscian terms such as "civil society" and "hegemony" (*Società civile* and *egemonia*) are much used in everyday political discourse. Santucci warns us, however, that these words have been appropriated by both radicals and conservatives for contemporary and often self-serving ends that often have nothing to do with Gramsci's purposes in developing them. Rather what we must do, and what Santucci illustrates time and again in his dissection of Gramsci's writings, is absorb Gramsci's methods. These can be summed up as the suspicion of grand explanatory schemes, the unity of theory and practice, and a focus on the details of everyday life. With respect to the last of these, Joseph Buttigieg says in his foreword: Gramsci did not set out to explain historical reality armed with some full-fledged concept, such as hegemony; rather, he examined the minutiae of concrete social, economic, cultural, and political relations as they are lived by individuals in their specific historical circumstances and, gradually, he acquired an increasingly complex understanding of how hegemony operates in many diverse ways and under many aspects within the capillaries of society."

Translation: Gramsci, as another of my intellectual heroes Paolo Freire, taught that actions speak more loudly than words (*le azioni parlano più forte delle parole*) and that knowledge is not merely intellectual decoration. One demonstrates knowledge by proving it works in successful actions. My first encounter with his work was via an old friend **John Cammett's** (1927-2008) *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism*. Some readers might not know that John was a founding member of the American Italian Historical Association (Now the Italian American Studies Association). Incidentally, my good newer friend, Pasquale Verdicchio, translated Gramsci's *The Southern Question* and is well worth a read.



There is great irony in the fact the Gramsci monument is placed in a predominantly Black and Latino low-income housing project in that Italian American politicians have long conspired with their Irish and Jewish partners to suppress Bronx minority voters in order to profit from local, state, and national political connections. Today, Black and Latino government officials have mostly escaped from their European-American masters and are demonstrating that political corruption is an equal opportunity employer. **John Gambling** once quipped about the prevalence of Bronx political bad guys that there must be something in its water supply. He then asked former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer for his take on the most recent (2013) Bronx scandals. Ferrer joked that "We had a gorgeous mosaic of corruption in the '80s," referring to the array of Black, Italian, Jewish, and Puerto Rican politicians who used to make up the culture of corruption in the Bronx.

In the equally corrupt but less "colorful" 1970s, with the support of Paul O'Dwyer, I attempted to form a progressive Bronx Puerto Rican-Italian-Black political coalition. With some progressive Blacks and Italian Americans on board, I tried to arrange a meeting (*Ho cercato di organizzare un incontro*) with a progressive Puerto Rican legislator in the Bronx. The response I got was that "they" would be happy to meet with the Italians but not with Blacks. Gramsci would recognize this as a clash between Civil Society and Hegemony (I think). The reputation of Italian American activism in the Bronx has always been confusing. As I drove through the South Bronx on the Sheridan Expressway recently, I saw the faded signs of the Father Louis Gigante South East Bronx Community Organization pasted on a large scale housing development. SEBCO was the allegedly "progressive" creation of Louis Gigante, a retired Catholic priest, and former Bronx NYC Council Member. However his **Genovese crime family brothers**; family boss Vincent "The Chin," and occasional acting boss Mario eventually made their impact felt in his once highly touted work.

The Bronx in general and more and less recent Italian American politicians in particular do not have a spectacularly good reputation. Probably the most well-known political Italo-icon was Democratic Party U.S. Congressman **Mario Biaggi**, but given that Italian Americans are political switch hitters we must also recognize the contributions of Republican New York State Senator **Guy Velella**. And as Gramsci makes his local appearance and Italian political clout continues to wane, we note the most recent troubles of Bronx Republican Leader **Joseph Savino**. More irony in the anti-Gramscian shenanigans of Italian Americans is sadly reflected in the role of SCOTUS members Antonin Scalia and Samuel Anthony Alito Jr. who voted to remove critical protections for minorities once embedded in the 1965 Federal Voting Rights Act. FYI: Like the states of the Deep South, in part due to the voter suppression and gerrymandering of Italian American political leaders, The Bronx was also covered by its requirements for judicial review of changes that would affect minority voters. One would have to wonder whether a trip by the real Antonio Gramsci to the Bronx would have made a difference... but then again Italy seems to be no better off for all his efforts. The best we can hope for is that Hirschhorn's monument will raise the political consciousness of those who continue to suffer from the abuses of corrupt politicians of every stripe. When will there be a Bronx Spring? (*Quando ci sarà una Bronx Primavera?*)

# DAILY LECTURE

## BY

# MARCUS STEINWEG

**29th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 29th July 2013**  
**WHAT IS REALITY?**  
**Marcus Steinweg**

Reality is a promise of consistency which is not kept. Here, I am using 'reality' to refer to everything which we assume has a certain consistency, whereby a certain consistency means a certain stability. Reality is synonymous with the space of facts, called the *symbolic order* by Lacan, the space of language, logos, and meaning pervaded by the imaginary. I am calling the universe of discursive facts and established consistencies 'the space of facts', i.e., all those things whose existence one can confidently assert. The space of facts is the space of existing things. These may be objects, such as a chair or computer, but may equally well represent ideas, opinions, hopes and suppositions. Facts also include non-material things which can be found as existent in the space of facts, and circulate in it as memories, certainties, dreams or fantasies and are thus constitutive of our reality. Reality is the space of facts populated by the most diverse things that are subject to factual codifications. Even if these codifications are contingent, they exist in the mode of ontological efficiency.

Reality is stratified, but its layers often overlap beyond recognition. Since the phenomena in the space of reality are codified as cultural, economic, historical, religious, social, political, scientific etc., reality is the dimension of discursive codifications. As a codified milieu of consistency, reality is overdetermined and overcomplex. The subject moves in this sphere of overdetermination and overcomplexity guided by constituted structures providing an orientation for thought and agency. And yet there are moments of critical disorientation. In those moments, the subject experiences the inconsistency of the contingent weft and warp of consistency, which is its reality. In the subject's experience of reality, existence and contingency are connected: *What exists does not necessarily have to exist as it is.*<sup>1</sup>

The subject is the agency of this experience. The subject is neither a self-transparent *ego cogito* nor a self-consciousness resting in itself, an auto-affect untouched by hetero-affects. Instead, the subject is the scene of self-mediation with its object elements marking its status in the world of facts. Subject and objects elements intersect in the subject. There is no reason to reduce it to only one of these elements. The subject's complexity inherently includes the impossibility of reduction to either a

subject or object status. The subject oscillates from here to there. While the subject thinks its object being, it is already, as a thinking object, a subject. And yet by opening up its object being as a subject, it is also thinking its own borders as a subject. A subject is what thinks as an object and, by conceiving of itself in this way, reveals its own being as a subject. This does not mean that the subject would be sheer thought, intellectual intuition, pure reason. This does not mean that it would be in possession of itself, identical with itself and founded in a substantial being-for-itself.<sup>2</sup> The subject is not a self that can be certain of itself as it is of a given. It is the scene of a self-experience which proves to be an experience of inconsistency to the extent that it experiences the lack of self as a condition for the possibility of itself.

What I call the subject stretches into the depths of an insubstantiality, which proves to be the transcendental form of the subject. The subject delineates the scene of an elemental emptiness and, in relation to it, every ontic-empirical subject experiences its reification – as if life means asserting one's singularity in the desert of a threatening universality in the certainty that this self-assertion never reaches a conclusion. The subject as a stage is not a subject of the stage, at least not primarily. One is familiar with the classic empirical subject, at times a colourful protagonist, at times a battered one, moving across the stage of the theatre of its being, which is its life. Since this is a central subject, the point where all possible narratives meet, the subject gains a coherence, foundation, and finality. Thus, the subject orders the world according to its own standards, becoming the model of that ontological facilitating agency which is the transcendental subject.

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<sup>1</sup> This is why Nancy can speak of the "necessity [...] of thinking the absence of any metaphysical necessity". See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II*, (trans. John McKeane), Fordham University Press 2013, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Nancy wrote: "The self is what does not possess itself and does not retain itself, and is, all told, what has its "itself" in this very same "not" itself: nonsubsistence, nonsubstance, upsurge, subject". See: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Hegel. The Restlessness of the Negative*, (trans. J. Smith and S. Miller) University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. 36.



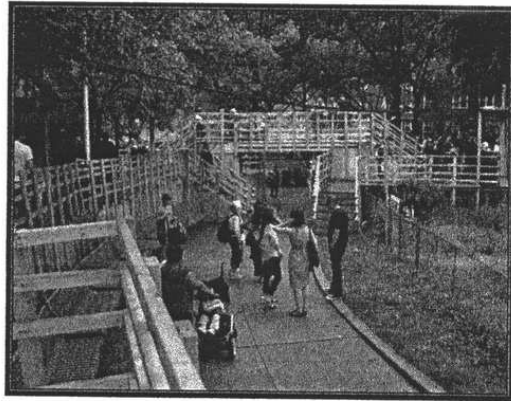
# FEEDBACK

**Worldcrunch**  
all news is global

Published on 2013-07-11 17:35:12

**LA STAMPA**

**GRAMSCI IN THE 'HOOD - WHY ITALY'S MARXIST ICON IS BEING HONORED IN THE BRONX**



Thomas Hirschhorn, Gramsci Monument, 2013 - (Andrew Russett) By Francesco Bonami  
LA STAMPA/Worldcrunch

**NEW YORK** - In the art world, auctions and mega galleries dominate. There are departed graffiti artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat who sell for tens of millions of dollars. Venice's biennial tips its hat to 'outsider' artists, such as Antonio Ligabue, and mixes them with 'insiders', such as Richard Serra.

Enter Thomas Hirschhorn, a creator of installations, spaces, meeting places similar to bidonvilles or Brazilian favelas – a real outsider. He is the last survivor of social art which aims to change not so much the history of art as the art of history -- and of life.

Invited by the visionary director of the New York DIA Foundation, Frenchman Philippe Vergne, Hirschhorn visited 46 of New York's 334 public housing units in search of the perfect place to build a monument to Antonio Gramsci, the revolutionary philosopher and founder of the Italian Communist Party.

In the end, he chose Forest Houses, an urban complex in the South Bronx which, until a few years ago, suffered from extremely high crime rates. Today the situation has improved a little. Once he had found the location, Hirschhorn moved there with his wife and child and started to work with the people of the neighborhood to create his idea for the monument. "A precarious monument, a short-term monument," he tells us, shirtless and lanky with glasses which make him look like a cartoon character from the 1960s. Hirschhorn has already built three monuments in this series dedicated to intellectuals he admires. One in Amsterdam in 1999 dedicated to Baruch Spinoza; another in 2000 in Avignon to honour Gilles Deleuze; and a third in Kassel in 2002 to celebrate Georges Bataille.



*Spinoza monument in Amsterdam - Photo: FaceMePLS*

"I dedicated monuments to these philosophers because they are thinkers who help us to believe in our capacity for reflection, they give strength to our thoughts, they encourage us to be active," he explained. "I like the idea of full-time thought. I like philosophy." Gramsci's will be the last. Anyone expecting a traditional style monument – a sculpture of Gramsci seated, maybe on a stool, with a book in his hand – will be surprised. Instead, the treehouse-like plywood and plexiglass construction is a moving makeshift open space that will host cultural events through the summer. Hirschhorn's monuments don't celebrate memories, the past or death, but life. They are a type of pop-up story; places which appear for a few months and then disappear, consigning history itself to stories, to experiences, to anecdotes, and to the disappointment of those who not only admired the monument but who lived it, as the people of the neighborhood have done and will continue to do -- a neighbourhood where Gramsci's name may have never even been mentioned before.

We spoke at length with the artist...

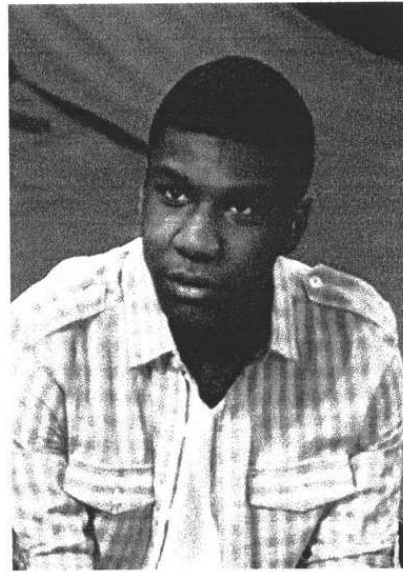
**La Stampa: Why the Bronx, and not Turin or Sardinia?**

*Hirschhorn:* I never choose a context that has anything to do with the philosopher in question. I look for places that can be in some way 'universal'. Forest Houses is, for me, a

# STEPS TO A BETTER FUTURE...

Trayvon Martin's Brother Lands Internship with Florida  
Congresswoman

By Charlene Cooper



**Jahvaris Fulton**

*PHOTO CREDIT: ILYA S. SAVENOK*

Trayvon Martin's older brother, Jahvaris Fulton, has scored an internship opportunity with Florida representative, Frederica Wilson, reports NBC News.

The Florida International University student participates in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, a mentoring program for at-risk boys living in Miami, created by the Democratic congresswoman.

When the internship begins, Fulton will work at Wilson's Miami Gardens office.

The 22-year-old recently testified in a case against George Zimmerman, who was being tried for second-degree murder and manslaughter in the shooting death of Fulton's 17-year-old brother, Trayvon Martin.

Zimmerman was found NOT GUILTY on all charges.

universal location that contains the reality, beauty, complexity, chaos and contradictions of our times.

**Why Gramsci and what does he represent for the people of the Bronx?**

Because his texts are a toolbox that even today everyone can use to consider real life. Because he wrote that art is interesting for its own sake and satisfies one of our many needs in life. Because he wrote that the only justifiable enthusiasm is that which accompanies activity and intelligent concrete initiatives, which can change the reality we live in. Because reading his writing is extremely encouraging. Encouragement can be shared by everyone, and therefore also by those here at Forest Houses.

**You are more interested in the concept of “energy” than of “quality”. Why is this?**

Energy is something that can be shared, and is universal. It is needed for all our activities, for our thoughts. The term *energy* is a positive term because it includes others; it goes beyond good and bad, beyond culture, politics and our aesthetic conventions. I am against the idea of quality everywhere, including in art of course. Quality is the unconditional reflection of luxury, it distances us from everything that is not 'quality'. The idea of quality is an attempt to establish a scale of values from high quality to low quality. Quality always excludes someone or something, energy does not.

**When talking about the film director Godard, you said that you don't do political art but you produce art politically. Can you explain what this means?**

To produce art politically means to take a risk, to enjoy your work, to be positive which means also knowing how to face the negative sides of things and reality. It also means making a decision, risking a statement, taking up a position that goes further than just simple criticism. It also means working for others. Making art politically means being a warrior.

**When your monument will be dismantled what do you hope to leave behind for all these people who you have gotten so involved?**

I hope that I will have been able to create a memory. My mission is to create a new idea of a monument, something that provokes encounters, which creates events and which makes us think about Gramsci today.

**What preparation does a visitor need in order to understand your work?**

No visitor needs any preparation to experience my work, or in general for any piece of art. Art can, exactly because it is art, initiate dialogue and personal interaction with anyone, directly.

Read the article in the [original language](#).

Photo by - Andrew Russeth

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Crunched by: Sarah Collings

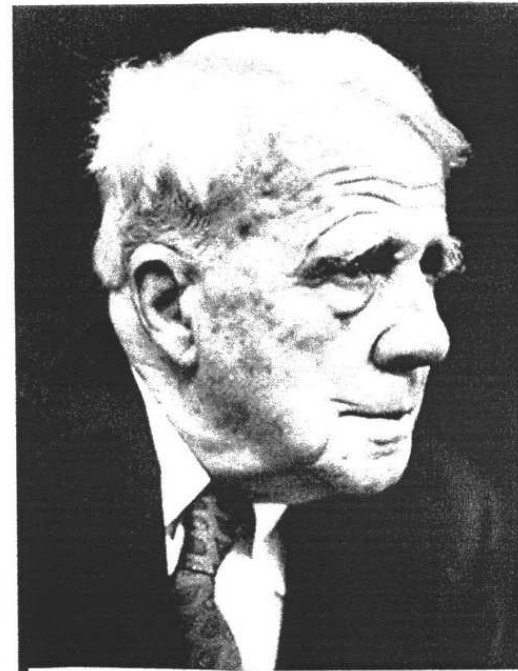
# POETRY

## The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back.



Robert Frost

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

# UPCOMING EVENT(S)

## City Council District 16

Meet the Candidates Forum

**September 5<sup>th</sup>, THURSDAY – 6pm**

FOREST COMMUNITY CENTER  
955 TINTON AVENUE  
BRONX, NEW YORK 10456



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- CRIME AND SAFETY.....
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- EDUCATION.....
- JOB.....

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