

Karin Christof (ed): Kunstwerken voor de publieke ruimte / Artworks for Public Space

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Artworks for Public Space offers a range of views concerning art in the urban realm. An international group of curators, critics and artists as well as the three winners of the Architectural Prize Haarlemmermeer 2008 give their opinions. Do artworks add an extra dimension to the public space or are they purely decoration? Podium for Architecture Haarlemmermeer and Schiphol wants to inspire architects, designers and policy makers to think about the role of art in public space.

The publication is a Dutch edition with contributions in English.

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Joel Tauber, *Sick-Amour* (California, 2006 – ongoing)

More often than not, public art works are static, compromised and rarely in tune with the given site. Occasionally a public work transcends these inevitable limitations and succeeds in pushing itself into the social/public sphere in a meaningful and provoking way *Sick – Amour*, by Los Angeles based artist, Joel Tauber is one work that achieves success by breaking traditional public art rules by being durational and expansive rather than passive and fixed.

Sick – Amour, is comprised by an adult sycamore tree and 200 of its Baby Tree offspring. The original tree was found in Parking Lot K of the Rose Bowl, an outdoor football stadium in Pasadena, California. The tree was dying of thirst, suffocating from the encroaching tarmac, and bruised and scarred from careless cars. This lone sycamore tree motivated Tauber to respond to the complacent

cruelty. After months of intense care, wrestling with the city council, and permanent alterations to the tree's immediate environment the tree has been lovingly rejuvenated. Thriving and adorned with makeshift jewels fashioned from stones, dried leaves, and fruit, the tree has spawned 200 Baby Tree offspring that are being raised by surrogate 'parents' at various sites throughout Southern California—as well as W139 exhibition and production space in Amsterdam—as shrines to urban trees.

Propagating the Southern Californian landscape with healthy sycamores is a quixotic and ambitious public art project that benefits from the implied long-term contract it demands of its participants. The symbolic and concrete stewardship of our environmental future is placed in the hands of the two hundred collaborators. Joseph Beuys' formative *7000 Oaks* (1982), inaugurated during Documenta 7, involved the heroic planting of 7000 trees over a five-year period in and around public sites in Kassel Germany was both nostalgic and tragic as in Germany the forest is an emotional national symbol. *Sick – Amour*, by contrast, provides a more provocative and confrontational model because it so clearly demonstrates the delicacy required to maintain an aspect of our surroundings that appears so prevalent as to become invisible. The sycamore is a hearty tree; smog, heat, and drought sturdy but endangered by our insatiable sprawl for Lebensraum.