

THE PAPER, THE GAME, AND THE CITY PARK:

Places for Things to Happen

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Game On

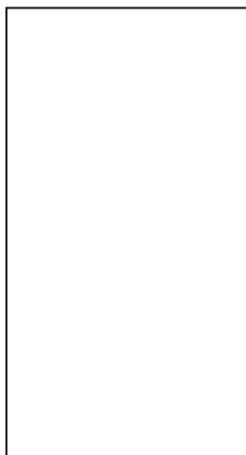
I pinned up a brand new empty sheet of paper to the studio wall. I was an undergraduate, and it was the first day of class. I looked around and all my fellow students were drawing – with purpose, it seemed. I was perplexed. Confused. I asked my instructor, “What are we supposed to be drawing?” Casually, he told me as he walked away, “This is Advanced Drawing.” I looked again at this empty, open field of paper. It had nothing. I had nothing. An overwhelming feeling of humility blanketed me. I realized, at that moment, I had so much to learn. Game on.

Musings About a Sheet of Paper

The open space of the paper is a place for something to happen. The function is indeterminate and undefined. It is an event space full of potential. The emptiness is a structure without an author. It is receptive and can be changed. Like the wider end of a funnel, it is open to infinite possibilities. The author is the person who uses it.

The space is defined by its edges. The edges set this space apart from the rest of the world. This delineation is simply a shared agreement. It is an invented language. This space is not real, but artificial – “art” being the root of the word artificial.

Through desire, intention, and non-intention, things can happen within this space. Various elements can interact. This interaction can take shape and form. The organization of these shapes and forms can create meaning, re-create some notion of reality or be reality itself. When graphite travels across this space, a line is recorded. When a paintbrush is used to apply a field of pigment to this space, the energy changes. The drawing, or painting, be-



comes a record of these events. Historical documentation. Things that happen in this artificial space are inseparable from the things that happen in real life – and vice versa. At the core, it's social. John Cage described, “Art as sort of an experimental station in which one *tries out living*” (1961: 140). We are the authors and participants. We invent the systems, rules, and structures. We also break them, revive them, subvert them, dethrone them, and reinvent them.

Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting*, 1952, turned on its side.

Ultimately, the drawing space is social and the power is vested in the artists. The world is changed in some way from our participation in this space. The game is changing too.

Musings About Soccer Fields

Much like a sheet of paper, or freshly stretched canvas, a soccer field is an open, rectangular space. Its edges are often made of chalk or spray paint. These lines are specific. They are delineated on the basis of a set of agreed-upon rules. There is an inbounds and an out of bounds. A soccer field is set apart from the rest of the world. It can be anywhere. It is an event space. The field itself is completely empty. The goal posts are out of bounds, just barely, but still out of bounds.

The players activate the space. There are two teams, twenty-two players on the field.

A soccer ball is kicked around. As the ball moves through the space, the players adjust accordingly – as a unit. The intention of kicking the ball is based on each team's opposing desires and shared goals. They work together. It is social. It is political.

There are rules. Referees help with this part of the game. Referees are responsible for maintaining order and enforcing rules.



When a player breaks a rule, the referee can issue a penalty and in some cases remove a player from the game entirely. Referees can “refer” to the official rulebook if necessary. Unfortunately, sometimes the referees use their authority to influence the game based on their own desires. This cannot be tolerated. This is unjust and unfair. The players and participants will not allow it. They will protest and eventually revolt. The game is too important. It means everything.

Camp Nou Soccer Field, Barcelona, Spain, 2015.

The soccer ball itself is meaningless. Interchangeable. It is just a tool. Its weight is regulated at 233 grams by a governing body. This has proven to be the best weight to facilitate a fair match. We all want a good game. Art, much like a soccer ball, is interchangeable and meaningless without the players. It is how we respond, change shape, and interact on the basis of its ever-changing context that counts. It's purely relational. Purely social. Art, like a soccer ball, can be replaced, pumped up, deflated, overly fetishized, lost, or eaten by a bulldog. It's about soccer. It has never really been about the soccer ball.

ACTIVATING DEMOCRACY

Spectators are also part of the game. They just watch and cheer supportively for the players who share their own desires, dreams and goals. They are safely distanced from the field and cannot directly affect the direction of the soccer ball. However, if coordinated properly, they can still influence the outcome of the game in strange ways.

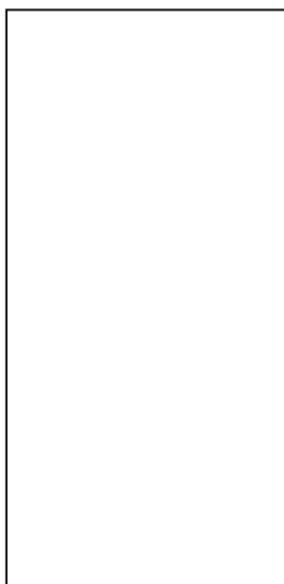
Ultimately, the soccer field is social and the power is vested in the players. The world is changed in some way from our participation in this space. The game is changing too.

Musings About City Parks

Much like a sheet of paper, freshly stretched canvas, or a soccer field, a public city park is an open space. A city park is a dedicated space, intentionally set aside from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the city. The function of a park is for recreation. Re-creation.

Socially, the park operates under and values a different system of exchange than the rest of the city. A functioning park is a shared space. It has edges. These edges are defined in different ways, such as sidewalks, walls, landscaping, or other architectural elements. They take on many shapes. Many of them are rectangular. You are either inside the park or outside the park.

Parks are designed and built by people. Structures, such as benches, walkways, plantings, fountains, playgrounds, and more, are built into the space to create opportunities for various things to happen – such as conversation, a game of chess, a rest in the shade, a picnic, a drum circle, or a leisurely stroll. You can walk across a park in the same way that you can draw a line across a piece of paper. If enough people take this same walk, a path will emerge. The park is not fixed, it changes constantly, based on the move-



ments and actions of the people who use it.

The public city park is not a real space, but an artificial one. It's an open and flexible structure amidst the controlled, rigid, privately controlled, functional spaces of the rest of the city. Parks transfer their authority to the public – much like the way Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting* (1952) is an open and flexible structure that transfers power to the viewers, allowing them to become the authors themselves.

Central Park, New York, New York, 2015.

Public parks are free social spaces, and anyone can use them. However, they do have rules. The public park, a citizen-funded space, is governed by our city officials. These officials are responsible for keeping order and enforcing rules. This ensures that citizens can experience and use the park safely and justly. Essentially, it's about fairness and maintaining a good park! When a person

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breaks a rule, a police officer can give a penalty and in some case remove a person from the park entirely. Police officers follow official “policy.” Unfortunately, sometime they use their authority to influence the activities of the park based on their own desires. This cannot be tolerated. The public will not allow it. They will protest and eventually revolt. The park is too important. It means everything.

Ultimately, the park is social and the power is vested in the people. The world is changed in some way from our participation in this space. The game is changing too.