

Creating shared public spaces for culture and play:



Lessons learned from
Governors Island,
New York City

Governors Island **basic facts**

- 70 hectares island in the middle of New York Harbor
- Sits 244 meters from Manhattan's Financial District and 91.5 meters from Brooklyn
- Former military base, closed to public its entire history
- Accessible only by boat
- First opened to the public in 2005

THE TRUST FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND



- In 2003, 61 hectares of Governors Island transferred to New York, now managed by The Trust for Governors Island
- Remaining 9 hectares of Island declared a National Monument, managed by the National Park Service, Federal agency



Northern half of the Island

- 37 hectare Historic District, protected by national and local landmark laws
- More than 52 vacant landmark buildings, totaling 130,000 square meters



Southern half of the Island

- 33 hectares of flat, featureless landfill
- New park required, new buildings and uses allowed
- Derelict buildings and obsolete infrastructure
- Closed to public until 2009



The Island (in 2006)

- Residential housing and casino development banned by deed
- Little to no credible interest from property developers
- Little to no public visitation or constituency
- Limited available public investment for infrastructure or required park

Start with **public use**, with **culture** as the magnet

- Activate the island
- Create desirable place for public, developers and political leaders
- Stimulate activity instead of drafting conventional master plan

Put Governors Island on the City's map

What is the traditional definition
of “culture”?



Lincoln Center, New York

Culture is in a **Box.**



Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

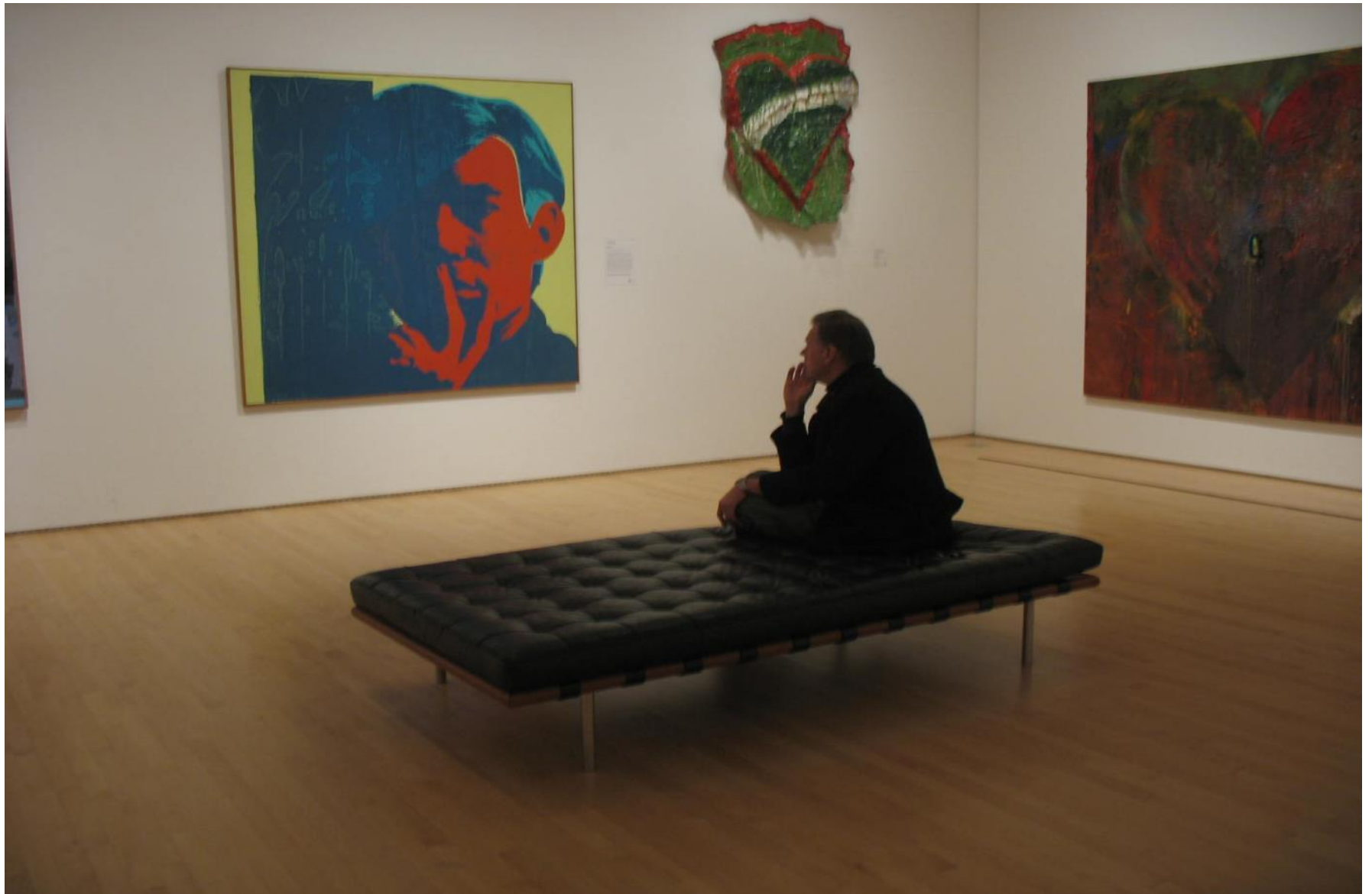


Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Miami, FL



Culture is for **spectators**.







Culture needs an **appointment.**



Or at least a **ticket**.

And what is the role of parks?



Parks are for **passive** recreation.

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Or **active** recreation.





Parks may allow “programming.”

But how does **the public**
on Governors Island
define and experience **culture**?



Culture is everything.



Jazz.



Electronic dance **music**.



Art installations.



African drum festivals.



Dance performances.



Theater.



Sculpture.



Culture includes food.





People like approachable culture.

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Which is easier outdoors.



Children want to **play**.



And **express** themselves.



So do adults.

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Culture can be created by anyone.









Including the audience.





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Culture is **social**.



With friends.



Or strangers.



Even better **together.**



Public spaces should let you relax,

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And alleviate stress of urban life.



Oslo Opera House, Oslo, Norway

So should opera houses.

Created by and for New Yorkers,



Governors Island is



New York City's



shared space for art and play.