Embodied Placemaking
in Urban Public Spaces
A Symposium in Two Parts

Center for 21st Century Studies
co-sponsored by UWM Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures Initiative, Center for Jewish Studies, Cultures & Communities Program, Peck School of the Arts, Departments of Anthropology and Geography, and Urban Studies

Part I: Friday, October 8, 2010
UWM faculty Arijit Sen (Architecture) and Lisa Silverman (History), symposium organizers

Part II: Friday, April 29, 2011
UWM faculty Merry Wiesner-Hanks (History) and C21 deputy director Kate Kramer, organizers

Curricular Guide:

On the face of it, time and place are obvious units of analysis. Recent scholarship and theoretical reflection in anthropology, history, architecture, urban studies, and other fields have centered on them. Much of this has focused on the ways in which we stop and take notice of extraordinary places, or write about special events and buildings. Ordinary moments rarely enter these narratives, yet time and place frame the experience of the everyday world and reality of today’s cities.

This symposium will focus on how people engage the material and social worlds of the urban environment via the rhythms of everyday life and the ways physiological bodily responses get implicated in the making and experiencing of place. We call this process “embodied placemaking.” It is embodied because it is intensely experienced and interpreted at the level of the human body via sensory responses. These processes frame the ways we remember places and events, engaging our bodies physiologically, psychologically, and socially. Embodied placemaking is a temporal process, often ephemeral and transient. It occurs on streets, edges of buildings, interiors, and in plazas. It happens momentarily or persists over days, repeats seasonally or remains a historical memory of an event from the past. Its very ordinariness and ethereality speak of deeply engrained cultural practices and knowledges that are so integral to our experiences and expectations of a city that we never question them.

Our speakers address embodied placemaking from a range of disciplinary perspectives and at multiple spatial and temporal scales. Several explore how buildings and cities can be designed in order to encourage and enhance possibilities of such engagements; others present case studies of such processes in contemporary cities. Several theorize on the cognitive and sensory processes by which individuals make place while others study the politics of embodied placemaking.
General issues that will be raised include:

- How can embodied placemaking help us understand the production of the public realm in a diverse multicultural society?
- Do embodied placemaking practices and processes change if we change the way we think of space (urban, street, building, interiors) and time (momentary, seasonal, historical)?
- What are the methods that can help us study these transient moments and incorporate momentary, performative, and episodic social events into our urban histories?
- How can a study of the urban public domain as constructed and construed by citizens via everyday experiences sustain and encourage the development of positive urban environments?

### Embodied Placemaking in Urban Public Spaces, Part I

**Friday, October 8, 2010**  
**Curtin 175, 3243 North Downer Avenue**

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<td>Joseph Sciorra (Queens College): Vernacular Exegesis of the Gentrifying Gaze: Saints, Hipsters, and Public Space in Williamsburg, Brooklyn</td>
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<td>Karen E. Till (Virginia Tech): Witnessing and Performing Place: Memory Traces of Displacement in Wounded Cities</td>
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Swati Chattopadhyay is an architect and architectural historian at the University of California Santa Barbara, specializing in modern architecture and the cultural landscape of British colonialism. She is the author of *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (2005), and co-editor of a special issue of *PostColonial Studies* (Nov 2005) focusing on “the subaltern and the popular.”

Charlotte Fonrobert is an associate professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University. Her most recent publication is “Introduction: Jewish Conceptions and Practice of Space,” with Vered Shemtov, a special edition of Jewish Social Studies 11 (Spring/Summer 2005) edited by Fonrobert and Shemtov.

James Rojas is an urban planner, community activist, and artist. One of the few nationally recognized urban planners to examine U.S. Latino cultural influences on urban planning and design, he holds a Master of City Planning and a Master of Science of Architecture Studies from MIT. His influential thesis on the Latino built environment has been widely cited. Growing out of his research, Rojas founded the Latino Urban Forum (LUF), a volunteer advocacy group, dedicated to understanding and improving the built environment of Los Angeles’ Latino communities.


Karen E. Till, an associate professor of Urban Affairs and Planning, School of Public and International Affairs, Virginia Tech, is the author of The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place (2005). Till’s current book in progress, “Interim Spaces: Memory-Work, Place and Artistic Practice in the City,” focuses on cities in which urban and settlement clearances have produced spaces steeped in oppression.
Embodied Placemaking in Urban Public Spaces, Part II
Friday, April 29, 2011
Curtin 175, 3243 North Downer Avenue

9 am 12:30 – 1:30 pm
Welcome Lunch

9:15 – 10:45 am
Mapping Space and Story in Urban Environments
Speakers: Rachel Breunlin (U of New Orleans) and Elizabeth Currid (USC)
Moderator: tbd

1:45 – 3:30 pm
Theorizing Space and Subjectivities Transnationally
Speakers: Emanuela Guano (Georgia State U) and Carl Nightingale (SUNY-Buffalo)
Moderator: Merry Wiesner-Hanks

9:15 – 12:30 pm
Engaging Visual Culture in the Public Sphere
Speakers: Jennifer Geigel Mikulay (IUPUI) and Janet Zweig (Brooklyn, NY)
Moderator: Kate Kramer

3:45 pm
Plenary

Rachel Breunlin, an assistant professor of Anthropology (U of New Orleans), is co-director of The Neighborhood Story Project, a documentary book-making project in New Orleans, where she works with residents in turning their interviews with the Story Project team into stories. She is the author of Cornerstones: Celebrating the Everyday Monuments & Gathering Places of New Orleans (2009).

Elizabeth Currid is assistant professor in the School of Policy, Planning & Development at USC. She is the author of The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City (2007) and co-author of the study “The Geography of Buzz,” with Sarah Williams (director, Spatial Information Design Lab, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation at Columbia University).

Emanuela Guano is associate professor of Anthropology at Georgia State University. Her research interests range from the study of ideology and the built environment to the analysis of spatial practice and discourse, and from the critique of citizenship and the public sphere to the exploration of how gendered subjectivities are crafted in the public realm. Her current ethnographic project focuses on the politics of gender, class, and heritage in Genoa, Italy. For the symposium, she will present “Impurity and Danger: Middle-Class Bodies and the Urban Experience in a Mediterranean City.”

Jennifer Geigel Mikulay is assistant professor of Museum Studies and Fine Arts at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Areas of specialization include public art, visual culture, new media, communications, and public sphere theory. As a public scholar and as a participant in IUPUI’s public scholars of civic engagement initiative, she collaborates with cultural organizations to produce new research and involves students in community-based learning.
Carl Nightingale, an associate professor of American Studies at SUNY-Buffalo, will present “Cross-Oceanic Connections between the Racial Politics of Place-Making in Johannesburg and Chicago.” Urban racial segregation in global perspective, as well as race, race theory and racial justice, are among Nightingale’s areas of specialization. His current book project “Segregation is Everywhere: A World History of Urban Color Lines” is under contract at U of Chicago Press.

Janet Zweig is an artist who lives in Brooklyn, NY. She is currently working on several public art commissions around the United States—including the streetscape, Pedestrian Drama, in Milwaukee—and has installed public works in New York, Seattle, Minneapolis, Santa Fe, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. Her sculpture and books have been exhibited widely in such places as the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Exit Art, PS1 Museum, the Walker Art Center, and Cooper Union. She has won numerous awards including the Rome Prize Fellowship, NEA fellowships, and residencies at PS1 Museum and the MacDowell Colony. She teaches at the Rhode Island School of Design and at Brown University.