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• [Art \(/art\)](#) **Bronx Bomber: Thomas Hirschhorn's 'Gramsci Monument'** (/bronx-bomber-thomas-hirschhorn-s-gramsci-monument-1.64904)

By [Reynard Loki \(/listings/Tag/Reynard Loki\)](#), September 17, 2013

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For his final work in a series of projects dedicated to his favorite philosophers, [Thomas Hirschhorn](#) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hirschhorn) erected a monument in honor of Italian political theorist [Antonio Gramsci](#) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Gramsci) right in the middle of a housing project in the Bronx. Produced by [Dia Art Foundation](#) (<http://www.diaart.org/>) with major support from the [Andy Warhol Foundation](#) (<http://www.warholfoundation.org/>), "[Gramsci Monument](#)" (<http://gramsci-monument.com/>) was a



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Editor's Pick



(/start-your-engines-ron-howard-s-rush-and-claude-lelouch-s-c-%C3%A9tait-un-rendezvous-1.64319?PQId=1.55285)

Start Your Engines: Ron Howard's "Rush" and Claude Lelouch's "C'était un Rendezvous" (/start-your-engines-ron-howard-s-

sprawling public space work which included academic seminars, poetry readings, workshops and a daily newspaper. It drew together communities which rarely interact and sparked serious conversations about race, power and capitalism—as well as criticism from both sides of the socioeconomic aisle.

Hirschhorn's previous temporary monuments were erected to honor [Baruch Spinoza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch_Spinoza) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch_Spinoza) in Amsterdam, [Gilles Deleuze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilles_Deleuze) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilles_Deleuze) in Avignon, France, and [Georges Bataille](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Bataille) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Bataille) in Kassel, Germany.

Gramsci is famous for his *Prison Notebooks* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_Notebooks), a series of more than 30 notebooks that he penned while imprisoned by [Benito Mussolini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Mussolini) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Mussolini)'s Fascist regime in 1926. The writings detail Italian history and nationalism filtered through Gramsci's reading of Marxist theory; specifically, his concept of "cultural hegemony" as a strategy used by the power elite to maintain the capitalist state.

Raised some four or five feet above ground level, with multiple ramps and stairs as access points, Hirschhorn's "Gramsci Monument" buzzed like a small self-sufficient community, complete with an art workshop for kids staffed by volunteer teachers; a print shop that printed daily Gramsci Monument newspapers; a library of books on and by Gramsci, Italy and Marxist theory; a gallery that included photographs, belongings (hair brush, prison shoes) and various ephemera from Gramsci's life; an online computer study center (two kids were listening to music on SoundCloud.com when we were there); an outdoor theater space for lectures and poetry readings; and even a comfortable place to eat (fried chicken, macaroni and cheese and non-alcoholic beverages were served at the outdoor bar).

The structure had a solid feeling, if temporary, and had all the hallmark sensibilities of an immersive Hirschhorn experience: an expansive installation constructed out of everyday materials like plywood, cardboard, duct tape and aluminum foil. Built in the middle of a field at the Forest Houses low-income housing complex in the Bronx, the work brought the art world cognoscenti to a neighborhood that they would probably never have experienced. Some of the criticism was directed at the art-industrial complex. One friend commented on the "contemporary art colonialism" of the work, while another saw one systemic lesson: It's pretty easy to introduce positive change. Last Saturday, as people engaged in political-theoretical debate following the final Gramsci Lecture, delivered by [Frank B. Wilderson III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_B._Wilderson_III) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_B._Wilderson_III), children were making art and getting time on the computer. Not bad for a temporary "monument."

Was the work a success? Considering Hirschhorn's stated goals of the project—establish a new term of monument, provoke encounters, create an event and "think Gramsci today"—it's mission accomplished. To paraphrase the refrain from *Field of Dreams* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_of_dreams): He built it, they came.

BlackBook dropped by "Gramsci Monument" on Saturday. Check out the video below to get a glimpse of the installation and some of the final Gramsci Lecture, delivered by Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine.

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Fine Art, Beer Flights, and Farm Food in Roanoke, Virginia