

streetscape and, apparently, the human spirit. Near his own Brooklyn home, Bradley notes, Eastern and Ocean parkways are much alike during the day. But on warm nights, Eastern Parkway throbs with life while Ocean Parkway is an urban desert. Ocean is illuminated by sodium lights, while Eastern is lit by newer metal-halide lamps that produce something much closer to the full-spectrum “white” light of the sun. In car dealerships and shopping mall parking lots, where bad lighting can hurt sales, metal-halide lights are invariably used. Costs are the rub. Metal-halide lights burn out relatively quickly. In 1992, the city of Toronto judged that a switch to the aesthetically superior lighting would triple maintenance out-

lays—yet made the change anyway.

Oddly, anti-light-pollution activists are adamantly opposed to the new technology. Astronomer David Crawford, executive director of the International Dark Sky Association, claims that it creates more glare than sodium lights. (And astronomers can more easily filter out interference from sodium lights.) But Bradley says that many specialists believe that the glare is caused by poor fixture design, not the lamps.

Where will it all end? Not in a world lit by metal-halide alone, Bradley hopes. As one lighting designer told him, using different kinds of lighting as each situation demands is the secret to creating a more “textured nighttime experience.”

## Smart, Smart, Stupid

“What Should We Ask about Intelligence?” by Robert J. Sternberg, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1996), Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Almost everyone knows of a bright, even brilliant person who succeeds in school but flunks in life. Is such an individual really intelligent? Yes and no, says Sternberg, a professor of psychology and education at Yale University.

Traditionalists in the controversial field of intelligence take much too narrow a view of what intelligence is, he contends. (See “The IQ Controversy,” *WQ*, Spring ’96, pp. 133–35.) He and other “revolutionaries,” notably Harvard University psychologist Howard Gardner, have been trying to expand the conventional horizons. Every major college textbook in introductory psychology “now prominently features two of the revolutionary theories,” Sternberg’s and Gardner’s.

In Sternberg’s view, intelligence has three major aspects: analytical, creative, and practical. IQ tests and the like tend to weigh analytical skills most, he writes, and these are

likewise emphasized in most school curricula (which is why such tests can predict school achievement fairly well). In fact, Sternberg says, schools sometimes even penalize the exercise of creative and practical skills, “as when students who depart from a teacher’s expectations or point of view find themselves graded down for having done so.”

Gardner favors a different typology, with seven “relatively independent intelligences”: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and “intrapersonal” (self-knowledge).

If human intelligence is as broad as he and Gardner believe, Sternberg argues, colleges and universities are misguided when they reject students because of low scores on SATs and other standardized tests. Such tests may indeed indicate likely class grades. But—as everybody with common sense knows—grades aren’t everything.

## ARTS & LETTERS

### *The Failure of Public Art*

“What Happens when American Art Goes Public” by Peter Plagens, in *New England Review* (Summer 1995), Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt. 05753.

Works of “public art” are everywhere to be seen these days, from downtown plazas and college campuses to office-building lawns

and lobbies. But whether sponsored by governments, universities, or corporations, argues Plagens, who is a painter and art critic

ic, public art usually doesn't work: either it displeases the public (or some angry, mobilized faction), or it simply is not good art.

Over the last dozen years, he says, most of the sculptures and other works of public art he has seen have fit the latter category. They are "arty but not too arty, playful but not too playful, colorful but not too colorful, and avant-garde but not too avant-garde." In short: mediocre. The "demi-sculptures" and "glorified benches" that have been materializing in America's public spaces are like "Fisher-Price toys for white-collar adults: you can walk on them, climb on them, play on them, and eat lunch on them," yet "for all their putatively progressive social trappings" they are "boring and even silly."

Unlike older public art by Alexander Calder and other artists, who exhibited mainly in galleries and museums, many of the new monuments are the work of artists who have left the studio behind. They go "from arts council to arts council, municipality to municipality, state to state . . . in answer to calls for public works of art." The resulting public art fre-

quently is "compromised and tepid."

Two works of public art that succeeded as art, in Plagens's view, prove the rule. Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.—"probably the best 20th-century work of public art in America"—is regarded as a great success. But when Lin's design was criticized as dishonoring those who had fought, Frederick Hart's more traditional sculpture of three soldiers was added, Plagens points out. "The society that commissioned [Lin's work] could not drink it down full." The lesson is even clearer in the case of Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc," a 120-foot-long, 12-foot-high wall of brown, stained steel that was placed in Foley Plaza in downtown Manhattan in 1981. So loud were the howls of protest from federal workers who used the plaza that the offending work (for which the government had paid \$175,000) was eventually removed (at a cost of \$50,000). Some critics blamed the debacle on the arrogant artist, but Plagens believes that "Tilted Arc" failed as public art chiefly because it worked as art: its "real sin was to disturb."

## Revenge of the Maus

"Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: Graphic Art and the Holocaust" by Thomas Doherty, in *American Literature* (Mar. 1996), Box 90020, Duke Univ., Durham, N.C. 27708-0020.

A Holocaust comic book seems an unlikely, if not indeed obscene, conceit, yet Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986, 1991), awarded a special Pulitzer citation in 1992, made it

work. In this two-volume cartoon biography of his father, a survivor of Auschwitz, Spiegelman cast the Nazis as snarling cats, Jews as forlorn mice, and Poles as stupid pigs.

IF YOU HAD STILL A HEALTHY BODY TO WORK, THEY PASSED YOU THROUGH AND GAVE YOU ANOTHER UNIFORM UNTIL IT CAME THE NEXT SELEKTION...



*The language and tone of Spiegelman's comic book work are tempered and austere.*