



Mary Miss; Cooper, Eckstut & Associates; and Child Associates, South Cove waterfront, Hudson River Park, view south, 1985, model in cardboard, foam rubber, and painted cork. Scale: 1/8" = 1'. From Battery Park City Fine Arts Program.

pervasive diminishment of interest in idiosyncratic and collective rites. His architecture injects meaning, through form, into life with the quiet persistence of a small fable.

Battery Park City Fine Arts Program

Battery Park City is a phenomenon that merits frequent visits. On a 92-acre landfill, this ambitious residential and commercial new-town-in-town is beginning to take shape. The project's public spaces, designated in the 1979 master plan by Cooper Eckstut Associates, may determine Battery Park City's long-term success. An esplanade stretches for more than a mile along the Hudson River and is the spine of a generous network of open public areas. Where there is public space there must be art, and the Battery Park City Fine Arts Program has selected artists to work singly and collaboratively with designers to develop proposals for public pieces. The first of these collaborations is the design for the World Financial Center Plaza, by Siah Armajani, Scott Burton, Cesar Pelli, and M. Paul Friedberg. This project was first presented in 1983 and is now reaching its final stage.

This spring, the Battery Park City Authority presented four more public art projects. Mary Miss, project-architect Stanton Eckstut, and Susan Child of Child Associates have created a proposal for Hudson River Park, in an area called South Cove; Ned Smyth, Nancy Graves, and Richard Artschwager have planned installations for the Rector Place-Gateway Plaza area.

The Battery Park City Fine Arts Committee—art and architecture profes-

sionals who serve pro bono—advises the Battery Park City Authority on the selection of sites for public art and recommends artists to create the works. Typically, artists selected by the committee submit proposals for specific locations. The Fine Arts Program's commitment to the production and funding of public art is exemplary, but the composition of the committee is perplexing. Should public art selection be placed entirely in the hands of the art and design experts? While this program was modeled after the Percent for Art programs operating in many cities, the Battery Park City Fine Arts Committee has not striven for members who form a cross-section of the community, as most Percent for Art panels have.

A look at the models of the four new proposals shows a range of interpretations of contemporary public art. Nancy Graves has proposed a large, plantlike arch of vividly colored and textured bronze; Richard Artschwager's design is a scattered arrangement of overscaled domestic chairs and tables, creating a private roomscape in a public plaza; and Ned Smyth has created a formal courtyard surrounded by rectangular benches and a procession of columns, some of which are topped with planters. The collaborative project by Mary Miss, Stanton Eckstut, and Susan Child is, not surprisingly, the most ambitious of the four proposals. Their proposal for Hudson River Park is a boardwalk which terminates in a graceful curved pergola. A bridge links this form in the harbor to a spiral observation tower on the waterfront. The materials suggest both vernacular seaside structures as well as tougher industrial

forms. This project is an eloquent and participatory design, the product of a seamless collaborative effort.

Battery Park City is an important laboratory for the evaluation of public art. My sole—but substantive—reservation is that, although the Fine Arts Committee has supported variety in its commissions, there are few surprises. In an age when the significance and iconography of public art is very much in question, the diversity of the project will make it a telling one to follow.

—PATRICIA C. PHILLIPS