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Housing Project Meets Art Project in the South Bronx

By *RANDY KENNEDY*

Temporary public art projects are plentiful in New York City but they rarely make their way to the South Bronx and almost never to the grounds of public housing projects. But beginning this month the Swiss artist [Thomas Hirschhorn](#), with the help of the [Dia Art Foundation](#), will build the last in a series of temporary monuments at the Forest Houses, a New York City Housing Authority development in the Morrisania neighborhood of the Bronx.

Called “[The Gramsci Monument](#),” the work – which will take the form of a kind of temporary pavilion built on the grounds of the housing project – will be the fourth such monument Mr. Hirschhorn has built over the last several years, dedicated to writers and philosophers – like Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze and Georges Bataille – whose ideas have inspired him. [Antonio Gramsci](#) was an Italian political theorist and Marxist who was imprisoned for many years under Mussolini. “The Gramsci Monument” will be the first such installation in the United States by Mr. Hirschhorn, who said he had chosen the site because of his desire to “create a new form” of public art, “based on love for a ‘non-exclusive audience.’ ”

The monument will be built under Mr. Hirschhorn’s direction, largely by residents of the Forest Houses, whom he approached several months ago to propose the project and who will be paid for their work. Work will probably last into June with an opening planned for July. The structure, to be made from inexpensive wood and other materials, will include an exhibition space, a theater area, a lounge, an Internet corner and a bar providing food, prepared by residents. Children’s workshops and lectures will be held, and a daily newspaper and radio station will be operated during the run of the monument, which will continue through Sept. 15.