

MARKO SIMCIC Park



PUBLIC
ART
vancouver



About the Work

Marko Simcic's *Park* activates the six-kilometer length of the Ontario Street Greenway and bicycle route with two moveable artworks that encumber the normal relations of the street. Each approximately the size and weight of a small automobile, they rest temporarily in curb lane parking spots, and are relocated from time to time to various addresses along the route.

Unlike the vehicles that make huge claims on our environment, these particular models are not mass-produced. Completely 'custom', the sculptures were cast in stainless steel, ground and sandblasted over the course of several years. In the process of making its way to the street, *Park* involved extensive design reviews that informed its final delivery and form. Subject to the same analysis as other mobile objects taking space on city streets, the *Park* 'cars' are licensed as floats, the closest suitable category under ICBC's index. Ironically, the sculptures' resemblance to the form and conditions of automobiles allowed the project to move forward. By displacing cars, by standing in for them, *Park* encourages us to consider the overbuilt personal objects that we buy, buff, maintain and identify with, and the space we give them in our daily lives. Stripped of utility, these objects

Above *Park UDW 86H*, 4400 block of Ontario Street, 2008. Photo: Howard Ursuliak

make the most of sculpture's capacity to encourage thinking, in multiple ways, simultaneously.

At first glance, parked amongst the rows of automobiles, the vehicles are comic anomalies in a familiar landscape. Should our curiosity slow us down, their profile echoes a distant horizon of peaks and valleys, dully reflective and weighty. Approach more closely and their surface is a fascinating and complex tableau of drapery shrouding familiar forms: lawn chairs facing one another, a picnic complete with portable barbecue and crockery. Inspired by the tarp-covered accumulations of stored objects in semi-private spaces like carports or walkways, but placed in configurations that suggest human interaction, these 'cars' become sombre, almost funereal monuments to moments of leisure and domesticity. They seem more solid than they are, much heavier and less mobile than the cars they displace. Having slipped past the boundaries marked by curbs and yellow lines, beyond the places we may expect to see art, *Park* invites a slower encounter than ordinarily found on a city street, our most symbolic public space.

The *Park* project is both static and dynamic. Prototypes with no practical application, the sculptures' substantial yet fragile presence will appear and disappear — next to schools or parks, commercial properties to the north, or in front of the homes of residents who have chosen to 'adopt' them by making their designated parking spot available. These residents, initially contacted through direct mail, have in some cases collaborated in curating the *Park* sites in their neighbourhoods, in a long-term relay extending over the next four years and possibly beyond.

Cars are a paradox of convenience and inconvenience, and carry the concepts of autonomy and individual freedom. *Park* plays with what the streets permit, provoking a consideration of the short history of our attachment to the automobile and a reconsideration of its future.

— Lorna Brown

Lorna Brown is a Vancouver-based artist, independent curator and writer.

Opposite *Park UDW 87H*, 3966 Ontario Street, 2008. Photo: Howard Ursuliak



About the Artist

Marko Simcic is an artist and architect, and his parallel practice explores a set of ideas shared by the two disciplines. Using the practice of drawing as a link, Simcic considers the concepts of boundary and encounter, material and surface, duration and the effects of time that are relevant to both architecture and public art. Initially proposed in 2002, *Park* has evolved through extensive research and civic engagement, and is open to many potential futures. Other sited works include *Light Ring* (2007), a collaborative project in Richmond, *Untitled (Terra Nova)* (1999) in Richmond, and *Utility Pole* (1997) in Vancouver. Simcic's architectural work has been published nationally and internationally and he is the recipient of a Lieutenant Governor's Award in 2008.

Park is programmed to occupy sites along the Ontario Street Greenway through to 2012. The future public presence of *Park*, in large part, will depend upon ongoing interest and participation by the citizens of Vancouver. For more information, see www.vancouver.ca/publicart_park or contact the City of Vancouver's Public Art Program at publicart@vancouver.ca or 604-871-6038.

Above Marko Simcic during fabrication in the studio at the City of Vancouver's National Works Yard. Photo: Howard Ursuliak

The City of Vancouver's Public Art Program incorporates contemporary art practices into city planning and development processes. The program supports excellence in art making of many kinds—by emerging and established artists, in new and traditional media, from stand-alone commissions to artist collaborations. The program aims to encourage a conversation between artists and the city by providing for the creation of art that expresses the spirit, diverse visions, and poetry of place that collectively define Vancouver. The program is part of the Cultural Services Division and oversees the development of public art opportunities throughout the city. Projects at civic buildings, greenways, parks and other public spaces are funded through annual civic capital budgets. Private-sector projects are funded by developments in the rezoning process. Learn more about this and other public artworks in the Public Art Registry at www.vancouver.ca/publicart; subscribe to the Public Art Listserv at the same site to be notified of upcoming artist opportunities.



Park was commissioned by the City of Vancouver's Civic Public Art Program as part of an ongoing commitment to provide contemporary public art projects in neighbourhoods throughout Vancouver.

Coverage *Park UDW 86H*, 4400 block of Ontario Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, October 2008. Photo: Howard Ursuliak



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