

Timefulness: Temporal Multiplicity in the Work of Nancy Holt

Krystyna Piccorossi

Distinguished Majors Program in Art History

Department of Art

University of Virginia

April 2024

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Figures	v
Introduction	1
Methodology: Timekeeping	10
Chapter 1: A Matter of Time	14
Uncovering the Timeful	20
Chapter 2: <i>Dark Star Park</i>	28
Complicating the Commemoration	36
A Bit of the Universe	42
Chapter 3: <i>Solar Rotary</i>	49
From 1492 to 1992	53
A Universal Time	58
Conclusion	64
Bibliography	67

Abstract

American artist Nancy Holt (1938-2014) is known for her public sculptures and works of Land art that are oriented in cosmic alignment towards the solstices, stars, or constellations. Two of her later works, however, are unique in Holt's oeuvre as the only of the artist's works that commemorate historical events: *Dark Star Park* (1979-1984) and *Solar Rotary* (1995). This marking of historical dates is significant because Holt's work – along with that of other associated Land artists – has long been characterized by both supporters and critics (and indeed the artist herself) as evoking a timelessness which elides human history. By examining the temporality of *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary*, I argue for a reassessment of Holt's work based on its awareness of temporal plurality. My central claim is that these works resist the label of timelessness by integrating multiple orientations that instead formulate a *timefulness*. Borrowing this word from Holt, I define the timefulness of the artist's sculptures using the notion of the “thickened present,” a present that is textured and complex from the layering together of multiple temporalities. In doing so, *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* trouble the regime of linear historical time, preempting the “temporal turn” that would later become a prominent strain of contemporary art and theory in the following decades.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Professor Henry Skerritt, for his continued support, guidance, and enthusiasm for this project, and for always extending the direction of my thinking. I am also thankful for the support of Professor Elizabeth Turner, who provided valuable suggestions and feedback on this project at its beginning and end.

I am indebted to Angela Anderson Adams at Arlington Public Art, whose advice, support, and conversation helped shape this project as it was beginning, and for providing me access to Arlington Public Art's files on *Dark Star Park*. Arlington's vibrant public art program planted the seeds for this project many years ago. I am grateful to Margaret Miller, Sarah Howard, and their colleagues at the Public Art Program at the Institute for Research in Art at the University of South Florida, who graciously made their archive of materials related to *Solar Rotary* available to me during my visit. I also wish to thank William T. Carson at the Holt/Smithson Foundation for providing me access to films made by Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, and for having answers to many of my questions. I must also thank the archivists and librarians at the Archives of American Art, the University of Virginia, and the Arlington Center for Local History, without whom my research would not have been possible.

I am thankful to Professor Giulia Paoletti for coordinating the Distinguished Majors Program in Art History at the University of Virginia, and for her continued support over the past year. My travel to Florida was generously supported by the Department of Art. I would like to thank Professor Douglas Fordham, Laura Mellusi, and Emily Chen for making this possible, and for supporting the department's Distinguished Majors Program as a whole. Additionally, my travel to Utah was made possible through a grant from the University of Virginia's College Council. I would also like to thank Dakota Jones and C.J. Oswald at UVA's Writing Center for their advice and suggestions to the entire DMP cohort.

I am thankful to Tom Parker, Kathy Freshley, and Joseph W. Kaempfer, Jr. for generously taking the time to speak with me about their vital contributions to *Dark Star Park*, and to Tom Martinelli, Lucy Lippard, and William Wylie for sharing their experiences with Holt and her work. I am also grateful to my fellow DMP students for their friendship and many productive conversations. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Vanessa and Michael Piccorossi, for their support and patience, and, in the case of my mother, for facing car troubles in the desert with me.

List of Figures

Introduction

Figure 0.1. Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*, 1973-1976, Great Basin Desert, Utah. Concrete, steel, earth. Overall dimensions: 9 ft. 2 1/2 in. x 86 ft. x 53 ft. (2.8 x 26.2 x 16.2 m); length on the diagonal: 86 ft. (26.2 m) Collection Dia Art Foundation with support from Holt/Smithson Foundation. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation / Licensed by Artists Rights Society, New York.....3

Figure 0.2. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979-1984, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia. Gunited concrete, stone masonry, asphalt, steel, water, earth, gravel, grass, plants, willow oak. Overall area: Two-thirds of an acre. © Holt/Smithson Foundation / Licensed by Artists Rights Society, New York.....4

Figure 0.3. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida. Aluminum, bronze, concrete, electric lights, plants. Overall dimensions: 20 x 135 x 135 ft. (6.1 x 41.2 x 41.2 m); central structure: 20 x 24 x 24 ft (6.1 x 6.1 x 7.3 m).....7

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1. Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*, 1973-1976, Great Basin Desert, Utah.....17

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979-1984, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia.....29

Figure 2.2. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979-1984, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia.....30

Figure 2.3. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979-1984, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia. Two aerial photographs taken by Nancy Holt, 1984 and 2009.....32

Figure 2.4. *Dark Star Park* Day gathering, Arlington, Virginia, August 1, 2023.47

Figure 2.5. Shadow alignment, *Dark Star Park*, Arlington, Virginia, August 1, 2023.....48

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.50

Figure 3.2. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida (detail, bronze historical plaque).....54

Figure 3.3. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995. University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida (detail, central seat).61

Conclusion

Figure 4.1. Nancy Holt, *Making Waves*, 1972. Ink on paper. 8 1/2 x 11 in (21.6 x 27.9 cm). © Holt/Smithson Foundation. Licensed by Artists Rights Society, New York.64

Introduction

[In] the spring of 1963 something affected me more than my interaction with any of the artists around me. There was a sudden moment out of time, or a timeless moment within time, when I had tremendous stillness and clarity. My body relaxed and my breathing came from a center which felt endlessly spacious. With every breath I was aware of sharing air, like an atmospheric bellows, with all the other beings on the planet.

– Nancy Holt¹

In 1963, Nancy Holt (1938-2014) experienced a transformative moment that would shape the rest of her career. Drawing a breath of shared, planetary air, Holt felt a moment out of time that interrupted the steady stream of her regular temporal awareness. Time became suddenly and momentarily dislodged from its normal march, opened up and stitched together with something new, a *timeless moment within time*. Even more influential than her interaction with the artists that surrounded her in New York – among them Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Joan Jonas, Robert Morris, Michael Heizer, Donald Judd, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson, whom Holt would marry later that year – this moment created a “profound and lasting shift in perception” for the artist.² Describing the paradoxical feeling of *timelessness* that seemed to occur within time itself, Holt’s awareness of her place on a shared planet became suddenly sharpened. Holt’s puzzling experience of time’s suspension introduced her to the central questions of perception and temporality which she would return to throughout her life. For Holt, whose career as an artist was only just beginning, this realization would progressively come to shape the nature of her sculptural practice, guiding her investigations into the intersections of the universal and singular experiences of time. After this formative moment in 1963, Holt searched for an explanation for her experience:

¹ Nancy Holt, quoted in James Meyer, “Interview with Nancy Holt,” in *Nancy Holt: Sightlines*, ed. Alena J. Williams (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 220.

² *Ibid.*, 221.

After that I related to the world differently, and had a strong desire to figure out what had happened to me. I didn't have any structure to understand such an experience, so I started digging into metaphysics, poetry, and Jungian psychology, reading whatever I could find, although previously I hadn't been particularly oriented that way. Through this reading I felt a connection with Emily Dickinson and T. S. Eliot. At that time there was very little written on comparative mystical experience, which attempts to get to the essence of an experience like mine.³

Whether Holt found the reason for her experience in metaphysics, psychology, or religion, or the words to describe it in Dickinson or Eliot, her artwork serves as clear evidence of her efforts to work through and concretize the issues of temporality she grappled with as a result.

Holt was, among other things, a sculptor, poet, artist, photographer, and filmmaker involved with the Land art, Minimalist, and Conceptual art movements of the 1960s and 70s. Closely associated with (and often overshadowed by) her husband and fellow Land artist Robert Smithson, Holt's career took off in the 1970s following Smithson's death in 1973, the same year she began her iconic desert earthwork *Sun Tunnels* (1973-76).⁴

Made during the height of the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) Art in Public Places Program (1967-1995), Holt's earthworks, installation projects, and public sculptures often relate to astronomy with elements that connect to the sun, stars, and constellations, and shadows that align at specific moments throughout the year. Grounded in their place, materials, and communities, Holt's works also explore the more conceptual issues of history, perception, and time. Returning again and again to that transformative moment of cross-temporal slippage she experienced in 1963, many of Holt's site-specific works attempt to catch, measure, and mark time.

³ Ibid., 220.

⁴ Holt was a major posthumous champion of Smithson following his death, contributing to publications, exhibitions, and other projects related to the artist's work. Lisa Le Feuvre, Executive Director of the Holt/Smithson Foundation has noted "[T]he Smithson that we know is Nancy Holt's Smithson." Lisa Le Feuvre, quoted in Jordan Eddy, "The Celestial Alignments of Nancy Holt," *Hyperallergic*, April 9, 2023, <http://hyperallergic.com/813560/the-celestial-alignments-of-nancy-holt/>.



Figure 0.1. Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*, 1973-1976, Great Basin Desert, Utah. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, 2024.

Informed by her interest in archaeoastronomy, a majority of Holt's outdoor sculptures are oriented in cosmic alignment. Drawing the sun down to earth in patterns of light and shadow, many of the artist's works conform to the timing of astronomical events or align with the positioning of the stars. The best-known example of Holt's celestial sculpture is *Sun Tunnels* (fig. 0.1). Located in Utah's Great Basin Desert, *Sun Tunnels* is a set of four concrete tunnels arranged in an X-pattern so that the sun becomes centered through the tunnels each year on the summer and winter solstices. Each of the four tunnels is pierced with the pattern of a different constellation: Draco, Perseus, Columba, and Capricorn, formed by arrangements of holes bored into the upper half of each concrete tunnel that bring down beams of sunlight into the space. While Holt has become known for sculptures such as *Sun Tunnels* that engage the cosmos on dates within the solar calendar, in the 1980s the artist began to use the solar alignment of her

works to mark events other than the naturally occurring solstices and equinoxes or the location of the constellations and stars. In *Time Span* (1981), a concrete, stucco, and steel sculpture on the shore of a lake in Austin, Texas, Holt calibrated the shadows cast by the sculpture's steel wheel to surround a plaque on the ground on April 5 each year. This shadow alignment marks not only the date of the work's completion, but also the artist's birthday, resulting in a sculpture that, in Holt's words, "celebrates its own existence."⁵ For the first time in Holt's career, the artist used sculpture to mark calendar dates related to human moments within time rather than purely astronomical phenomena.



Figure 0.2. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979-1984, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, 2023.

⁵ Nancy Holt, "Descriptions of Works in Slides," n.d., Box 9, Folder 6, Nancy Holt Estate records, circa 1900-2014, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Though *Time Span* introduced a new dimension to Holt's temporal marking, two of her later sculptures take this marking further by commemorating specific historical events. Three years after *Time Span*, Holt completed *Dark Star Park* (1979-84, fig. 0.2), a work composed of gunite (sprayed concrete) spheres and tunnels, pools of water, and steel poles arranged within the curving paths of an urban park located in the Rosslyn neighborhood of Arlington, Virginia. The shadows cast by the poles and spheres of *Dark Star Park* align with forms outlined on the ground at 9:32 a.m. on August 1 each year, marking the day in 1860 that William Henry Ross acquired the land that would become the neighborhood. In this local commemoration, Holt introduced an aspect of social history to her repertoire of solar marking.

The first commissioned work of public art in Arlington, *Dark Star Park* began with an application for an NEA Art in Public Places grant, and grew into a close collaboration between the arts, local government, and the business community, with Holt taking on the role of the park's designer. Since its dedication in 1984, the community has gathered to witness the work's solar commemoration of the past each year on August 1, a date that has earned the name "*Dark Star Park Day*."

As a major public work, *Dark Star Park* is included in most discussions of Holt's oeuvre.⁶ Indeed, *Dark Star Park* has been celebrated by community members, critics, and art historians for its integrated approach to public art that responds closely to the community and site. However, few commentators have noticed the complex interaction between cyclical time and social history that distinguishes the sculpture from Holt's earlier celestial works. This relation between cyclical and historical time, often absent from the site-specific works of the

⁶ See, for example, Lucy R. Lippard, "Tunnel Visions: Nancy Holt's Art in the Public Eye" and Pamela M. Lee, "Art as a Social System: Nancy Holt and the Second-Order Observer in *Nancy Holt: Sightlines*, ed. Alena J. Williams (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011). Angela Anderson Adams and James Nisbet have addressed *Dark Star Park's* temporality in further detail, which I will return to in Chapter 2.

wider Land art movement, is central to understanding Holt's oeuvre and the conceptual issues of time and location investigated by the artist throughout her career.

One of my central claims is that when one pays close attention to the specificities of Holt's temporal marking, three distinct forms of marking time emerge in the artist's career. The first type, which characterizes Holt's best-known works, relates to the deep history of celestial or planetary events, including the solstices and equinoxes. The second form of temporal marking identifies the cyclical time of seasonal recurrence, distinguished by cycles of return that repeat at the same time each year. The third marks the linear time of modern historicism, taking the form of the commemoration of events from the linear time of social history. By introducing this third mode of temporal marking, *Dark Star Park* not only marks a clear shift in Holt's work, but I argue that it hints at a profound realignment in the artist's thinking, towards a more nuanced approach to the heterogeneity of temporal modes coexisting in the present.

After *Dark Star Park*, Holt would not highlight social historical dates through shadow alignment again until *Solar Rotary* (1995, fig. 0.3), a sculpture in Tampa, Florida that the artist once described as an embodiment of her "whole lifetime of art."⁷ Located on the campus of the University of South Florida, *Solar Rotary* is a site-specific work constructed within a circular concrete plaza. The central element of the sculpture is an elevated aluminum sun that casts a circular shadow on the ground, aligning with bronze plaques set into the concrete plaza. Five times each year, the circular shadow centers around these plaques, which are inscribed with local historical dates.⁸ On the summer solstice, *Solar Rotary's* shadow becomes nearly perfectly vertical, coming to rest around a central concrete bench below the aluminum sun between 1:31 and 1:32 p.m. Over a decade after she first orchestrated an ephemeral commemoration of the past

⁷ Nancy Holt, quoted in Evan Perez, "Castor Christens Solar Rotary," *USF Oracle*, March 28, 1995, 3.

⁸ These dates are listed on page 49 in my later discussion of *Solar Rotary*.

with *Dark Star Park*, Holt once again used sculpture, and the entire cosmos, to catch and knot together cyclical and historical time.



Figure 0.3. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, 2023.

As the two sculptures that mark historical dates through shadow alignment, *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* stand apart from the rest of Holt’s astronomically aligned works. These two works add the dimensions of history, locality, and memory to Holt’s outdoor works, complicating her already nuanced preoccupations with time and perception. Like that of many of her Land art contemporaries, Holt’s work has frequently been labeled as “timeless.”⁹ This

⁹ Noting how Land artists often sought encounters with a primitive landscape, Antonia Rigaud has argued that “Land artists mark the land in order to enact the quest for orientation, and create works that seem to try to recapture an original sense of the land.” Antonia Rigaud, “Disorienting Geographies: Land Art and the American Myth of Discovery,” *Miranda 6* (2012): 5. Rebecca Butterfield argues that earthworks, including Holt’s, “all focus on creating a sense of timelessness or on making connections between the far distant past and the unforeseeable future.” Rebecca Ann Butterfield, “Colonizing the Past: Archaic Reference and the Archaeological Paradigm in Contemporary American Earth Art,” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1998), 248. Also regarding Holt’s work, Sarah Hamill uses the word to describe Holt’s sculpture *30 Below* (1979): “Holt forces us to reconcile the

description (if not to be taken for its literal meaning of “the absence of time”) is often used to evoke the artist’s concern with the “deep time” of geology and the cosmos.¹⁰ For some critics, however, this timelessness is far from politically neutral. According to such accusations, by summoning the universal, seemingly endless, and nearly imperceptible reach of deep time, Land artists like Holt elide more localized, personal, and variegated experiences of time. Such critiques of timelessness were leveled at much late-modernist work, which came under increasing scrutiny in the late 1960s with the rise of feminist, decolonial, and other socially aware practices, all of which rejected the idea of artistic universals.¹¹ Earthworks characterized as timeless have sometimes been accused of glossing over the specific histories of the land on (and from) which they are constructed by harnessing the time of the sun and nature to pass over the shorter timeframes of social history.¹² Though they often depart from the Land art traditions of monumental scale and remoteness of location, many of Holt’s works have fallen into this catch-all temporal categorization. The accusation of timelessness (a word used frequently by the artist herself) fixates on the ways that the astronomical aspect of Holt’s works appears to blend

arbitrariness of viewing on the ground with an absolute, timeless order.” Sarah Hamill, “30 Below,” Holt/Smithson Foundation, February 2021, <https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/30-below-0>. Kelsey Ables has described *Dark Star Park*’s timelessness: “Holt nudges visitors toward a timeless state by redirecting our attention.” Kelsey Ables, “Once a year, the shadows in Arlington’s Dark Star Park align. This year, it feels especially profound,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/museums/once-a-year-the-shadows-in-arlingtons-dark-star-park-align-this-year-it-feels-especially-profound/2020/07/29/8a7a460c-d00f-11ea-8c55-61e7fa5e82ab_story.html. Anne Barclay Morgan has also described *Solar Rotary* in this way, commenting “her extraordinary work is timeless.” Anne Barclay Morgan, “Site: Nancy Holt,” *Sculpture*, January 1996, 15.

¹⁰ “Deep time” was originally coined by the writer John McPhee who applied the term to geologic time. John McPhee, *Basin and Range* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), 133.

¹¹ Critic Jeff Kelley has summarized this nicely: “During this prosaic renaissance of American art, formalism, with its shield of ‘timelessness,’ began to deteriorate.” Jeff Kelley, “Common Work,” in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1994), 144.

¹² James Nisbet addresses this in his critique of *Dark Star Park*, asking “Does *Dark Star Park* celebrate cycles of astronomical and seasonal time as a form of gliding past and effectively erasing the more turbulent events of human history that have transpired during those solar alignments of the past four hundred years?” James Nisbet, *Second Site*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 48. Jasmine Liu has criticized the timelessness of Land art more generally: “[T]he assumption of emptiness or neutrality common to descriptions of land art gives way to historical forgetfulness.” Jasmine Liu, “What Do Native Artists Think of Michael Heizer’s New Land Art Work?” *Hyperallergic*, September 21, 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/763203/what-do-native-artists-think-of-michael-heizers-new-land-art-work/>.

the temporality of the sculpture into the deep, seemingly eternal timescales of the universe. What this accusation fails to consider is the way that Holt's later works such as *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* point towards a multiplicity of specific, unique experiences of time that are grounded in place.

It is my contention that *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* mark a shift in Holt's oeuvre precisely because they complicate the perceived timelessness which has resulted in critiques of Land art's erasure of specific local histories and experiences. I argue that these works are the results of Holt's experimentation with a temporality that resists the label of "timeless" by integrating multiple temporal orientations that range from the local to the (literally) universal. Through my examination of *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary's* interactions with time, I demonstrate how these works exemplify Holt's struggle to express nascent ideas about temporality and suggest that these works preempt the emergent "temporal turn" that would become a prominent strain of contemporary art and theory in the twenty-first century.¹³ I propose that Holt's experiments with time and history in *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* expose a temporal plurality, in which the time of the sculpture becomes textured by acknowledging a multiplicity of temporalities that shift and influence each other. Holt's fight to articulate these ideas about temporality produced works like *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* which, resisting the limitations of perceived sculptural timelessness, combine the cyclical movement of astronomical phenomena with the commemoration of social historical events to uncover a multiplicity of temporalities underlying a present that is more *timeful* than timeless.¹⁴

¹³ I rely on art historian Christine Ross's definition of the temporal turn in contemporary art. See Christine Ross, *The Past is the Present; It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

¹⁴ "Timeful" is a term I borrow from Holt's 1976 "Self-Interview" which was published for the first time in *Nancy Holt / Inside Outside*, ed. Lisa Le Feuvre and Katarina Pierre (New York: Monacelli, 2022). I define this in more detail on pages 26-27.

Methodology: Timekeeping

When you drive from Salt Lake City to *Sun Tunnels* in Utah's Great Basin Desert, you briefly cross over into Nevada before returning to Utah, avoiding a string of mountains that sit on the state line. One morning in March, as I drove down Interstate 80 into the Nevada desert before turning back east, I noticed a small sign on the side of the road announcing that I had entered the Pacific Time Zone. Time spun backwards an hour, throwing me briefly into a state of temporal confusion. Soon however, I had crossed back into Utah's Mountain Time Zone, and time rewound itself, catching back up with me before I reached my destination. Within the hour, I stood at the center of Holt's four concrete tunnels, rotating to look through each in turn. Hearing the wind in the tunnels and watching the shifting patterns of shadow and light, Holt's words about time were on my mind. Time zones and clocks didn't quite seem to measure up anymore. After some time, I retraced my journey along unmarked dirt roads, crossed over the border into Nevada (and back again), and the clock was sent spinning once more.

Experiences like these shaped the first of three main avenues of inquiry that form the methodology for my rereading of Holt's works as *timeful*. Firstly, my approach begins and ends with the objects themselves, grounded in a study of these works undertaken during site visits to each. My travel to Utah in March of 2024, which was funded by a grant from the College Council at the University of Virginia, was the last of three such site visits. The first was to *Dark Star Park*. I grew up in Arlington, Virginia, and while I do not remember the first time I visited *Dark Star Park*, I began to pay more attention to the work following the celebrations for the

thirty-fifth anniversary of the park in 2019.¹⁵ I returned to *Dark Star Park* on a variety of occasions since then, and it was with renewed curiosity that I joined a hundred or so other visitors on August 1, 2023 to watch the shadows align. With support from the Department of Art at the University of Virginia, I was able to travel to see *Solar Rotary* in Tampa, Florida to witness one of the work's six shadow alignments on August 14, 2023. As site-specific works, these sculptures must be experienced in person. Perhaps more importantly, it was imperative to experience Holt's commemorative public sculptures on the particular dates of their solar alignments in order to develop an understanding of how *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary's* commemorative events occur over time and engage with the sites and communities that surround them. Maintaining the centrality of the artwork to my analysis is an understanding of Holt's works not only as the clearest articulations of the artist's ideas, but also as sites that participate in an ongoing exchange with their surroundings over time.

My investigation is also reliant on a close reading of the artist's archive, one that is somewhat scattered across the institutions that commissioned Holt's work, but concentrated at Archives of American Art in Washington, DC which has held the majority of the artist's papers since 2021. In June 2023, I spent a week with Holt's project files at the Archives of American Art, and returned in August after conducting site visits to *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary*. During my visit to *Solar Rotary* in Tampa, I reviewed the small archive of documents and interviews related to the work's construction held by the Public Art Program at the Institute for Research in Art at the University of South Florida. Additionally, I consulted an archive of documents related to the initial construction, restoration, and ongoing maintenance of *Dark Star*

¹⁵ The thirty-fifth anniversary celebrations were organized through a partnership between Arlington Public Art, the Holt/Smithson Foundation, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Events included a panel discussion, screenings of Holt's films, and a site-specific musical performance during the August 1 shadow alignment.

Park at the offices of Arlington Public Art in August. Holt is an artist whose career began with poetry and conceptual text-based works, and any understanding of her later sculpture and Land art would be incomplete without paying careful attention to her words.¹⁶ At times, it felt like I was having a conversation with Holt through her archive. This was a somewhat confusing conversation that often seemed to go in circles, taking us back to questions I thought we had answered, running us into dead ends and contradictions. Frustrating as these conversations sometimes were, they always led me back to the objects themselves, the sites where the ideas Holt explored in words were most fully and sophisticatedly realized.

Finally, I apply contemporary theory related to time to these objects, which allows me to read the temporal orientations of these sculptures with a more developed conceptual vocabulary, a vocabulary which Holt lacked when creating her own work. I bring this theory to bear on these works not to be revisionist or presentist, nor in an attempt to inflate the importance of Holt's works, but because I view these sculptures as thinking through the very same ideas that scholars have assigned words to in the decades since these works were created. By rereading Holt's works in light of this theory, I aim to recognize and capture the full complexity of the temporal work Holt performed starting in the 1970s.

As Holt wove time together with history in sculptures like *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary*, these works show the artist presciently grappling with ideas of time that would become increasingly pertinent to contemporary artists across the world in the decades to come. Responding to social, political, and environmental issues of the past decades and often advanced by time-based practices (such as film, video, and performance), many contemporary artists

¹⁶ These issues of time can be seen in poems and works from throughout the artist's career, such as *Making Waves* (1972), discussed on page 65, and *New Years* (1971), which were both published in a 1980 issue of the literary magazine *Chelsea*.

explore the plurality and malleability of time, playing with ways to rearticulate the relationship between past, present and future.¹⁷ These crucial debates about progress, history, contemporaneity, and the many ways of accounting for the present have become more relevant in the fast pace of an increasingly globalized world. As the politics of monumentality and commemoration have become more urgent and weighted in recent years, Holt's commemorative works are compelling examples of the ways artists work through these questions of time, memory, and historicity by and through the marking of time.

¹⁷ For an in-depth study of this work, see Christine Ross, *The Past is the Present*.

Chapter 1: A Matter of Time

For the time being, in the interim, in the course of time, from day to day, from hour to hour, until, in due time, and in the fullness of time, time endures, goes on, remains, persists, lasts, goes by, elapses, passes, flows, rolls on, flies, slips, slides, and glides by.

– Nancy Holt¹⁸

Published in a 1978 special issue of *Arts Magazine* dedicated to Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt's poem "The Time Being (For Robert Smithson)" is not just a poem for her husband, but a celebration of time. Seeking to capture it in its fullness, Holt's time is active, complex, and ever moving. Time rolls forward day by day, hour by hour, but endures, persists, and lingers. In her poetry, Holt puts into words the fixation on time and its passing that drove her artistic production. When asked in 1995 about the long and often delayed bureaucratic process of public art projects, Holt replied that, in order to work in public art, "You have to have a love of durational time."¹⁹ Holt's sculptural interactions with time are not simply the results of this "love" of time, but evidence of a more troubled relationship with both duration and presentness.

An exploration of the poems, essays, films, and interviews Holt produced alongside her site-specific works reveals many of the conceptual questions the artist grappled with. Describing the temporal qualities of *Sun Tunnels* and its site in an essay in *Artforum*, Holt declares: "the feeling of timelessness is overwhelming."²⁰ The rocks are "ageless," the sculpture, calibrated to the solar year, engages the cyclical movement of the sun, and the site is located near one of the few places on earth where you can see the curvature of the earth, all of which converge to evoke a "sense of being on this planet, rotating in space, in universal time."²¹ For Holt, "timelessness is

¹⁸ Nancy Holt, "The Time Being (For Robert Smithson)," *Arts Magazine* 52, no. 9, Special Issue: Robert Smithson (May 1978), 144.

¹⁹ Nancy Holt, interview by Vincent Ahern, September 12, 1995, recording, Archives of the Public Art Program, Institute for Research in Art, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

²⁰ Nancy Holt, "Sun Tunnels," *Artforum* 15, no. 8 (April 1977): 34.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

not a mere mental concept nor a mathematical abstraction, it is visual. You are confronted with it continuously.”²² At other times, however, Holt’s confidence in the work’s timelessness begins to falter, commenting in her 1976 “Self-Interview” that “*Sun Tunnels* is set up for the sun and its extremities, which adds another dimension to the timelessness – or timefulness, I can never decide.”²³ Revisiting *Sun Tunnels* soon after it was completed, Holt was attempting to unravel the complexities of the time of the sculpture, grasping for a word that might accurately describe the temporal experience of the work. Here, Holt voices her hesitation in labeling the temporal character of *Sun Tunnels* and its site, articulating a central conflict between the perceived timelessness of endless duration and more specific temporal awarenesses of the present.

Though she begins to question the term, Holt names what she sees as “timeless,” portraying *Sun Tunnels* and its site as a place frozen by the deep stretches of geologic time. Holt’s characterization of this timelessness is supported by a narrative in which she claims the sharing of the present with a much older past through the unchanging cycles of the sun, commenting, “Being there you feel connected with those people and with the fact that they saw the same sunrise and contours. You feel connected into human prehistoric times.”²⁴ This primordial view of Holt’s work is echoed by the sculptural dialogue often claimed between her works and prehistoric monuments or Indigenous earthworks.²⁵ Holt describes the sensation of

²² Nancy Holt, “Self-Interview,” in *Nancy Holt / Inside Outside*, ed. Lisa Le Feuvre and Katarina Pierre (New York: Monacelli, 2022), 102. Holt’s “Self-Interview” was originally recorded in September 1976 during a visit to *Sun Tunnels* with the filmmaker Ardele Lister while working on her essay for *Artforum* and is an adaptation of a dialogue where Holt both asked and answered her own questions. In the final essay, Holt changes her words, writing instead, “‘Time’ is not just a mere mental concept or a mathematical abstraction.” Holt, *Sun Tunnels*, 34.

²³ Holt, “Self-Interview,” 102.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁵ This association is also promoted by writers such as Lucy Lippard, who included *Sun Tunnels* on the cover of her classic book on contemporary and prehistoric art, *Overlay*. See Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983). Though Land artists (including Holt) do claim inspiration from such monuments, Rosalind Krauss criticized art historians who make this comparison: “Stonehenge, the Nazca lines, the Toltec ballcourts, Indian burial mounds - anything at all could be hauled into court to bear witness to this work’s connection to history and thereby legitimize its status as sculpture.” Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October*, vol. 8 (Spring, 1979): 33.

“walking on earth that has surely never been walked on before,” and also (somewhat paradoxically) a feeling of “sharing the same landscape” across “thousands of years of human time” with the people who had (supposedly) lived in nearby caves.²⁶ Alicia Harris reminds us that the unnamed Indigenous people that Holt claims to share the landscape with in Box Elder County, Utah are the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, and that their traditions do not include living in caves, but in conical wood or hide dwellings.²⁷ Larry M. Taylor has also outlined the ways in which postminimalist artists like Holt cultivated “near fetishistic fascinations with the Indigenous,” underscoring how the orientation of *Sun Tunnels* towards the solstices draws from the calendrical phenomena of many Indigenous religions.²⁸ It is on these terms that Holt labels the timelessness of her work, a timelessness seen in the supposed sharing of the distant past with the present across the sun’s cycles that have remained constant and unchanged throughout human history. On one level, the label of timelessness seeks to refer to the spectator’s sense of being on the planet and in the universe within the seasonal return of the sun. On another, Holt’s articulation of this timelessness functions almost a primitivizing force, serving not only to erase time and its passage, but to elide the human culture and history of the place. Though Holt narrates in her defense of timelessness a feeling of shared experience with unnamed Indigenous people under the cycles of the sun, her promotion of this notion of

²⁶ Holt, “Sun Tunnels,” 34-35.

²⁷ Alicia Harris, “Homescapes: Indigenous Land Art and Public Memory,” (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 2020), 19. In Holt’s “Self-Interview,” she mentions a connection she feels with the Fremont culture, the “oldest people who ever lived in the Americas.” Holt, “Self-Interview,” 102. The Fremont people did live in Utah and did reside in cave dwellings. Whether her essay refers to the Shoshone or the Fremont culture, Holt’s comments do not reflect a meaningful recognition of the land’s history.

²⁸ Larry M. Taylor, “Indigenous Minimalism: Native Interventions,” in *Double Desire: Transculturation and Indigenous Contemporary Art*, ed. Ian McLean (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 140-141. This critique is not unique to Holt’s work and has been directed towards the work of other Land artists. Terry Smith makes a similar point in his critique of British Land artist Richard Long, noting how his work “settles into the stasis once ascribed to the art of ‘primitive man’: it aspires to be unchanging, timeless, eternal.” Terry Smith, *Art to Come: Histories of Contemporary Art*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 189.

timelessness also depends on her portrayal of the site as a place without history, as existing in a time different from her own. In depicting the site as a land without any remaining culture or history, Holt participates in a wider problem that Johannes Fabian has termed the “denial of coevalness,” the systematic tendency to view the Other as existing in a separate time.²⁹



Figure 1.1. Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*, 1973-1976, Great Basin Desert, Utah. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, 2024.

With *Sun Tunnels*, Holt is caught by a temporal problem that ensnared many of her contemporaries. Art historian Pamela M. Lee has defined how, faced with rapid technological change that accelerated the pace of life, many artists and critics of the 1960s struggled with an anxiety and obsession with time. Lee has explored attempts by artists of the sixties to measure,

²⁹ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 31. Sociologist Tony Bennett also observes a colonial separation of time, one that places the Other in “either a flat time – a time outside of developmental time, running constantly at the same level or ... a flat time that had become a descending time, time on the way out.” Tony Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution Museums Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 150.

slow, stop, or otherwise manipulate time, defining an uneasy “chronophobia” of the period.³⁰ Opening with a study of Michael Fried’s anxiety with minimalist duration in his influential essay “Art and Objecthood” (1967), Lee explores “the endless, ‘on and on’ of a new kind of art making” of the sixties.³¹ Fried’s hostility against the endless repetition and indefinite duration of minimalist sculpture is accompanied by a promotion of the presentness of modernist art which “has no duration,” itself exhibiting its own kind of chronophobia.³² Though modern artists formulated a timelessness through a presentness and instantaneousness of experience, many artists of the sixties were attracted by a world of endless duration.³³ For many Land artists, this world of infinite, atemporal duration meant a move into the American desert where they could build monuments to eternity in so-called empty places devoid of human history.

Though Holt seems to see the Great Basin Desert as a place beyond time, she also views it as a place where time “takes on a physical presence,” a notion that further muddles her defense of timelessness.³⁴ The nearby rocks, though “ageless,” bear the mark of the deep passage of geological time in their sedimented layers. Aligned with the cycles of the solar year, *Sun Tunnels* takes on its own distinct manifestation of time’s material presence, catching a transitory yet eternally recurrent time in its exchange of shadow and light. Though the wide expanses of the desert itself might appear as frozen in timelessness to an outsider (as it did to those settlers who viewed the American west as uninhabited and without history), *Sun Tunnels* begins to mark time

³⁰ Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004), xii. I view *Sun Tunnels* as part of this longer sixties that extends before January 1, 1960 and beyond December 31, 1969. Lee argues that, in certain ways, “the sixties are endless,” pointing to Fredric Jameson, who conceives the period as “the sharing of a common objective situation” rather than a decade marked on a calendar. See Fredric Jameson, “Periodizing the 60s,” *Social Text*, no. 9/10 (Spring-Summer 1984): 178-209.

³¹ Lee, *Chronophobia*, 38. Christa Robbins has further argued that Fried’s anxieties were part of a homophobic and heteronormative sensibility towards modern art. Christa Noel Robbins, “The Sensibility of Michael Fried,” *Criticism* 60, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 429-454.

³² Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 22.

³³ Lee, *Chronophobia*, 45.

³⁴ Holt, “Sun Tunnels,” 34.

and make it visible as it glides by on the solstices, adding definition and dimension to the temporality of the desert. Holt's use of the word "timelessness" seeks to capture how the long stretches of deep astronomical and geological time drawn into focus by *Sun Tunnels* exist seemingly beyond the reach of human comprehension, thus making the work appear atemporal or timeless. However, the artist's unease with labeling the work as such marks a shift in her recognition of how *Sun Tunnels* discloses the specificities of this deep time by focusing perception onto the geology of the surrounding mountains and the movement of the planets.

Sun Tunnels provides a natural starting point for us to recognize both the implications of timelessness and the ways Holt began to think beyond it through her later work. Though Holt herself promoted an ambiguous timelessness in her writings surrounding *Sun Tunnels*, the sculpture itself begins to complicate the artist's temporal engagements as it marks the cycles of solar time. Though *Sun Tunnels* begins to make the presence and passage of time more visible, Holt would not fully explore the marking of time until *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary*. I define these two sculptures as *timeful*, borrowing a word used by Holt in her struggle to find the vocabulary to articulate *Sun Tunnels*' temporal character.³⁵ I argue that this term reflects the network of intersecting times that are engaged by Holt's later commemorative works, sculptures that move beyond the singularity of the cyclical temporal orientation of her earlier work to capture a temporal multiplicity. In contrast to the word *timelessness*, which has often been too readily applied to objects that simply employ a cyclical temporality, my use of the word *timefulness* aims to both recognize cyclical time as a form of time and articulate the polytemporal nature of Holt's later works.

³⁵ Holt, "Self-Interview," 102.

Uncovering the Timeful

While it may be difficult to visualize the multiplicity of time (or what I mean when I use the word *timeful*) in the abstract, I would like to introduce the ideas of a number of scholars working on the subject of time before turning back to Holt's artworks. Though the distinction between the timeful and the timeless may be a subtle one, the political, theoretical, and ontological stakes of this distinction become clear when considering the practices of modern historicism and metric time which have become the dominant matrices onto which western temporal experiences are mapped. As Dan Thu Nguyen has noted, metric clock and calendar time, entrenched in systems of conquest, mapping, and labor, have become the markers of the dominant and "real" western temporal regime. Nguyen has argued how this "standard and universal time is an *instrument*" which was "born out of a desire to conquer space."³⁶ Achieved through the discovery of the longitude at sea, the conquest of space sought also to impose temporal order on a world seen as timeless and uncharted. Erasing all other temporal regimes in the process, this control was continued later by the regimented measure of the working day.³⁷

Writing within the field of Indigenous studies, Mark Rifkin has coined the term "settler time" to refer to this hegemony of the western framework of time. Noting the ways in which distinct non-native and Native experiences have been plotted on a singular shared modernity, history, and present, Rifkin argues that the "supposedly objective givenness of simultaneity, of an unmediated mutual now, depends on a historicist conception of time as an unfolding, universal line of development."³⁸ This historicist conception of time, which arranges past,

³⁶ Dan Thu Nguyen, "The Spatialization of Metric Time: The Conquest of Land and Labour in Europe and the United States," *Time & Society* 1, no. 1 (January 1992): 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁸ Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 19.

present, and future on a neat, progress-driven line, defines western notions of time and has come to be viewed as a natural, universal, and neutral canvas onto which all experiences are either mapped or exist separately from. Rifkin rejects this universalizing notion of western historicist time which has become naturalized as the single “real” time underlying cultural construction, arguing that this view “implicitly casts non-Euro-American forms of temporal experience as a form of belief, rendering them less real than dominant accounts of a shared, linear time.”³⁹ Compelling us to think beyond this singular flow of linear time “as simply marching forward in universal synchrony, with everyone occupying a singular now,” Rifkin proposes instead that “there must be a way of thinking the plurality of time.”⁴⁰

Rifkin and Nguyen call attention to the temporal violence of colonialism which has cemented linear, historical, and metric time as the markers of a supposedly universal and natural time that measures all experiences. This universal notion of time as a single, shared line of development has overwritten the variegation of lived temporal formations in favor of the “real” time of modern historicism. Within this framework, there exist only two temporal possibilities: the adherence to this time or the relegation to timelessness. In this dialectic of time (a historical time which is linear, measured, and universal) and timeless (a category applied to all other temporal formations) there is no room for the lived experiences of temporality. As Nguyen has aptly described it, when the abstraction of time as measured by the clock and calendar had flattened out the heterogeneity of temporal experiences, “an apparently irremediable breach had emerged between the human definition of time and the lived experiences of temporality.”⁴¹ This “human definition” of time in terms of the forward-moving progression of time in metric

³⁹ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁴¹ Nguyen, “The Spatialization of Metric Time,” 34.

increments resulted in a “temporal vacuum” which was created when “there is no longer an option other than universal standard time, the measurement of time.”⁴²

Nguyen and Rifkin’s work shows us how understanding the possibility of temporal multiplicity requires both a questioning of the processes that have come to solidify the rule of settler time and an openness to the unlearning of the habit of linear time. These ideas help us understand Holt’s work in new ways by delineating the systems which have constructed the dialectic of time and timelessness which the artist grappled with, further underscoring the importance of the temporal plurality Holt was only beginning to think through in the 1970s. When describing *Sun Tunnels* and its site, Holt recognized the validity of the non-linear temporal orientation of the solar alignments of her work. But, like many of the critics and art historians writing about her work, Holt was caught by this dialectic which left her no other choice but to characterize these temporal formations as timeless. At the same time, Holt’s hesitation in calling it such by proposing an alternate word – *timefulness* – demonstrates her recognition of the inadequacies of this system in accounting for the complexity of the lived experiences of time. As Holt thought beyond the singularity of time in her work, she points us towards the notion that, as universal and natural as linear time may seem, it does not account for the numerous ways that human beings actually experience time.

I focus on *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* because they reflect Holt’s experimentation with ways to artistically articulate her nascent ideas about temporal plurality. Thinking past a singular sense of time, these works introduce a historical dimension to the cyclical orientation of her sculpture which has come to be viewed as timeless. As both *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* commemorate moments of conquest and ownership, the notion of settler time becomes useful in

⁴² Ibid.

understanding the temporal multiplicity invoked by her public sculptures, which themselves often reflect Holt's fascination with Indigenous sites. As Rifkin clarifies, attending to the multiplicity of temporal formations by thinking beyond settler time does not mean simply offering a broad typology to distinguish between two distinct temporal experiences – such as linear versus circular senses of time, but opening up avenues for exploring the relations between the varied experiences of time without plotting them on a common timeline.⁴³ Though Holt began to explore beyond linear time with *Sun Tunnels*' cyclical component, her sculptural engagement with time did not consider the full plurality of time (and the interaction and relation between distinct temporalities) until *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary*. As Holt began to recognize the temporal limits of works like *Sun Tunnels* and grapple with the conceptual, artistic, and sometimes political implications of time, she was compelled to confront time, in all its multiplicity, and break open the universal categories of time and timelessness.

We might imagine Holt's sculptural engagement with time in her later work as a layering and knotting together of varied temporalities into a timefulness which draws attention to the contemporary moment as a "thickened present." Borrowing from Edmund Husserl, Harry Harootunian has defined this present as "thick with different practices from other modes ... mixed temporal regimes declaring their affiliation with different times now passed but still retained with their corresponding political demands."⁴⁴ Harootunian's conception of the thickened present depends on an understanding of "non contemporaneous contemporaneity," a mingling of mixed temporalities that sits concealed beneath the surface of a singular

⁴³ Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 17.

⁴⁴ Harry Harootunian, "Remembering the Historical Present," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 477. Husserl imagined the "thickened present" as a present filled with different moments and temporalities, with a "comet's tail" of retentions of past events clinging to it.

homogeneous modernity.⁴⁵ Harootunian suggests that an awareness of this thickened present might allow us to undo the processes that have upheld the regime of clock and calendar time “to disclose the texture of the uncanniness of mixed temporalities it had smoothed out and straightened.”⁴⁶ Harootunian’s conception of a thickened present is echoed by art historian Terry Smith’s view that contemporaneity consists of the “actual coincidence of asynchronous temporalities, in the jostling contingency of various cultural and social multiplicities.”⁴⁷ To recognize this thickened present and acknowledge the possibility of the coincidence of asynchronous times, the façade of a homogenous modernity that has emerged in the past centuries must be uncovered.

When Nancy Holt proposed *Sun Tunnels*’ potential timefulness, she identified a temporal orientation for her sculpture that reveals the texture of intersecting yet asynchronous temporalities. This concept of timefulness was later explored by the geologist Marcia Bjornerud, who defined the term as “an acute consciousness of how the world is made by – indeed, made of – time.”⁴⁸ Writing from the perspective of a geologist, Bjornerud advocates for a polytemporal worldview and criticizes the impulse to erase time: “Although we may fervently wish to deny time for reasons of vanity, existential angst, or intellectual snobbery, we diminish ourselves by denouncing our temporality. Bewitching as the fantasy of timelessness may be, there is far deeper and more mysterious beauty in timefulness.”⁴⁹ If timelessness absorbs the past, future, and present into an empty and homogenous eternity, a timeful present may be thought of as one

⁴⁵ Ibid., 490.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 486.

⁴⁷ Terry Smith, “Introduction: The Contemporaneity Question,” in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, ed. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 9.

⁴⁸ Marcia Bjornerud, *Timefulness: How Thinking Like a Geologist Can Help Save the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 5.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 18. Bjornerud argues that an awareness of the earth’s polytemporality or “timefulness” is vital for creating a sustainable future for the planet.

that, in the words of art historian Christine Ross, “gains in texture, thickness, influence, and complexity when it is set into proximity with the past and the future.”⁵⁰

Ross observes a temporal turn in contemporary art, noting how many film, video, performance, and installation artists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century experiment with temporality, reorienting the modern conventions of a singular, future-driven, progressive unfolding of historical time. Building on François Hartog’s definition of the “regime of historicity,” western modernity’s organization of past, present, and future in a progress-based relationship, Ross notes how many contemporary artists’ temporal work “corresponds to an aesthetic turning of the *futuristic* regime of historicity of modernity into a *presentifying* regime in which the articulation of the past, the present, and the future is rethought.”⁵¹ One means of achieving this “presentifying” aesthetic is by suspending the forward movement of images and narratives to draw out the texture and plurality of the present as temporality works to condition historicity.⁵² Though her work predates the younger generation of the temporal turn that Ross studies by a number of decades, I argue that Holt’s sculptural investigations of the multiplicity of time constitutes a temporal shift of her own, during which she explores many of the same issues faced by these artists.

In defining the timefulness of Holt’s later work, I draw on these conceptions of the thickened present as defined by twenty-first century historians and theorists. In their privileging of the thickened present, timeful works do not shy away from time, smoothing the present out into a boundless, unchanging eternity. Nor do they promote the singular line of modern

⁵⁰ Christine Ross, *The Past is the Present; It’s the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 14. As defined by Ross, the temporal turn includes artists such as Francis Alÿs, Guido van der Werve, Mark Lewis, Tacita Dean, Melik Ohanian, Harun Farocki, and Stan Douglas.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

historicism, driven solely by progress and a focus on the future. Building on Holt's early temporal experiments, *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* bring the cyclical time of solar return together with the linear time of local history, resulting in a timefulness that is found in the uncovering of a present that is textured by a plurality of temporalities. In defining the temporal turn in contemporary art, one of Ross's central claims is that "one of the most pivotal temporal investigations of contemporary art lies in its development of an aesthetics which brings together time and history, contemporary experiences of temporal passing and modern historicity."⁵³ It is precisely this union between lived experiences of time *and* modern historicity that defines the timefulness of Holt's later public sculpture. This acknowledgement of lived temporal experiences permits Holt's work to disturb the singular rule of historical time, revealing the legitimacy of the coexistence between these formations. Refusing the notion that non-linear experiences of time are simply "timeless" because they cannot be mapped neatly onto a progress-driven line, Holt's later public sculptures assert the timefulness of these temporal formations and the relations between them. As these experiments in timefulness preempt the twenty-first century temporal turn, they introduce new questions about the nature of marking the past in the present.

While I am using timefulness as an alternative to others' use of the word timelessness, the two concepts are more than dialectical opposites. Rather than simply being the inverse of timelessness by revealing the presence of time (which would be simply "time," bringing us back to the singular view of a universal, historical, and measured time), timefulness is characterized by an insistence on the multiplicity of time. To better understand this distinction, we can first summarize the notion of timelessness in three related ideas: eternity (having no beginning or end), unchangedness (not being affected by time), and ambiguity (not specific to a particular

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

time or historical period). Rather than being eternal, endless, and unchanged, the timeful is aware of its past and bears the evidence of change over durational time. Instead of belonging to an ambiguous and unspecific time, the timeful is historically determined, the result of the conditions of its place and time. Perhaps most importantly, the timeful insists on the plurality of temporal formations that coexist in the present (such as the cyclical time of nature, the linear time of human history, and the deep histories of the cosmos), each one working to shift and influence the other. Timefulness is not just about rejecting the label of timelessness by acknowledging the presence and influence of time, but a refusal of the premise on which it is based. By confronting the hegemony of measured historical time which casts all other temporal orientations as timeless, timefulness declares the multiplicity of time.

Chapter 2: *Dark Star Park*

When Nancy Holt arrived in Arlington, Virginia in November 1979 to visit the site where she had been asked to create the county's first commissioned public sculpture, she was met with an urban wasteland. Nestled between two converging streets in the Rosslyn neighborhood, the abandoned lot once held a gas station and warehouse; now it was home only to piles of rotting timber and splintered fences, carpeted with overgrown weeds and a layer of broken asphalt and glass. Over the next five years, Holt transformed the site into a park. Occupying the dual role of artist and designer, Holt created what Rosalind Krauss would term both a "site construction" and a "marked site," as defined by Krauss in her seminal essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," published the same year.⁵⁴

Five years later, Holt's completed work, *Dark Star Park*, was formally dedicated in June 1984, a composition of concrete spheres, circular pools, and tunnels situated deliberately along undulating gravel paths to create a variety of lines of sight. As pedestrians and drivers pass by the park, the spheres of different sizes eclipse each other and can be seen reflected in the shallow pools or through the concrete tunnels. Flowing onto the plaza of the office building behind the park, a grassy berm covers the two tunnels, one of which is large enough to walk through and connects the park with the sidewalk.⁵⁵ On the opposite side of the berm, three steps rise from the sidewalk and lead to a viewing platform for the smaller tunnel which functions as a telescope or viewfinder. Fabricated from gunite, a type of sprayed concrete typically used for swimming pool construction, the spheres dot the grassy landscape between willow oak trees. Balanced on the

⁵⁴ Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* vol. 8 (Spring, 1979): 30-44

⁵⁵ Holt worked with Joseph W. Kaempfer, Jr., the developer of the adjacent office building, which was built at the same time as *Dark Star Park*. In exchange for delaying *Dark Star Park's* construction to allow Kaempfer to use the site as a staging area during the building's construction, Kaempfer contributed to the park's budget and allowed the park to flow directly onto the property. The initial plans proposed by Holt included a large mound of earth built onto the side of the building, which would obscure several stories of windows, but a compromise was reached with a much smaller mound. Joseph W. Kaempfer, video-call interview with the author, July 6, 2023.

edges of shallow pools of water, some of the spheres are pierced by a single hole that frames views of the other planet-like forms.



Figure 2.1. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia, 1979-1984. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi 2023.

The derelict lot Holt visited in 1979 forms the base for only the northern side of the park, which is bisected by a slip lane (fig. 2.3). The southern tip of the park is built on a triangular traffic island which was added to the property only after Holt convinced Arlington County to work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to incorporate the island into the site, claiming additional land for her artwork.⁵⁶ Though physically distanced from the northern section of the park, this triangular offshoot is no afterthought. The traffic island holds two of the large gunite spheres, each positioned between two steel poles. On the ground, the dark asphalt

⁵⁶ Thomas C. Parker, letter to Nancy Holt, September 15, 1980. Box 3, Folder 21, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

outlines of two ovals and four lines extend from the bases of the spheres and poles, forming patterns in the shape of the shadows cast by concrete and steel constructions (fig. 2.2). The true shadows cast by the poles and spheres dance among these forms outlined on the ground, only matching their asphalt twins for one moment each year, at approximately 9:32 a.m. on August 1, marking the date in 1860 that William Henry Ross acquired the land that would later become Rosslyn from his father-in-law, Joseph Lambden. Unlike the shady northern side, this southern section of the park sits exposed to the sun, setting the stage for the shadows' yearly alignment with the forms outlined on the ground. *Dark Star Park* harnesses the entire solar system for this ephemeral commemorative performance, in Holt's words, "merging historical time with the cyclical time of the sun."⁵⁷



Figure 2.2. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979-1984, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, 2023.

⁵⁷ Nancy Holt, "Dark Star Park," in the brochure *Dark Star Park: Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia: Nancy Holt*, produced by Arlington County, Virginia in 1984 on the occasion of the park's dedication. Box 3, Folder 30, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Dark Star Park has been considered one of Holt's landmark public art projects, an urban counterpart to her master earthwork, *Sun Tunnels*. Long celebrated as a work of integrated public sculpture, *Dark Star Park* set the model for Arlington County's public art program and demonstrated the potential for collaboration between local government, business, and the arts. Since it was completed in 1984, the work has maintained the interest and admiration of the community. Each year on August 1, without formal planning or coordination, a group of people gather around the sculpture to watch the shadows align and celebrate "*Dark Star Park Day*," as it is now known in Arlington. Though art historians, critics, and community members have expressed a broad interest in the work's commemorative function and interaction with time, *Dark Star Park's* subtle marking of temporal multiplicity merits further investigation.

Dark Star Park's temporal orientations have not been totally overlooked, but the literature surrounding the work has yet to address the full complexity of its system of temporal marking. Angela Anderson Adams, Director of Arlington Public Art, notes that Holt "embraced what time and visitors added to the piece," from the leaching of minerals on the surface of the spheres to the development of "desire lines," paths created in the grass by erosion caused by years of pedestrian foot traffic (fig. 2.3).⁵⁸ Noting how *Dark Star Park*, like any work of public art, remains subject to community priorities and tastes that shift over time, Adams highlights how the park (along with the programs, maintenance, and interpretive efforts on part of the office she directs) has changed with the years while continuing to captivate the interest of Arlington's residents. Referring to "time" singular, Adams focuses on the way that the forward movement of linear time has brought change to both the work itself and the interests of the community. Adams

⁵⁸ Angela Anderson Adams, "Nancy Holt's 'Dark Star Park,'" Holt/Smithson Foundation, September 2020, <https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/nancy-holts-dark-star-park>.

emphasizes how *Dark Star Park* is made by (and continues to be made by) time, bearing the marks of past weather and climate conditions, as well as the movement of people in and around the space.



Figure 2.3. Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*, 1979-1984, Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia. Two aerial photographs taken by Nancy Holt in 1984 (left) and 2009 (right).

Art historian James Nisbet offers a more critical appraisal of *Dark Star Park's* engagement with time, positioning the sculpture within a broader discussion of the effects of environmental change on site-specific works. While Adams highlights Holt's embrace of the ways the park has changed over time, Nisbet identifies these changes as "fissures" that appear not only in the physical cracking of the concrete as it ages, but also in the park's vexed relationship to "the discrepant time worlds of its site."⁵⁹ Though Nisbet does recognize a

⁵⁹ James Nisbet, *Second Site* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 47.

multiplicity of temporalities in *Dark Star Park*, he views these times as incompatible, noting that the sculpture registers a collision between the urgency of commuting to work through the urban neighborhood and the “seemingly timeless astronomical alignment of the stars.”⁶⁰ Nisbet further questions *Dark Star Park’s* interactions with cyclical time, asking:

Does *Dark Star Park* celebrate cycles of astronomical and seasonal time as a form of gliding past and effectively erasing the more turbulent events of human history that have transpired during those solar alignments of the past four hundred years?⁶¹

Nisbet’s argument is caught by a particular contradiction between timelessness and historical time. Nisbet questions whether *Dark Star Park’s* cyclical component works to “glide past and effectively erase” the historical time of the place, but he also criticizes *Dark Star Park* as being a work that “perpetuates and even commemorates the colonial dispossession of lands from their Indigenous inhabitants in North America and elsewhere.”⁶² Nisbet is stuck in a paradox, fixed in the idea that *Dark Star Park* is either timeless (eliding the history of the place) or commemorative (celebrating Rosslyn’s colonial history). Caught in this dialectic which does not permit for the recognition of other temporal modes, Nisbet’s critique brushes aside *Dark Star Park’s* cyclical temporality as timeless while foregrounding the work’s commemoration of the historical ownership of property. Within a narrow view of time which forces him to see the historical time and cyclical time of the work as incongruous forces that exist wholly in opposition to each other, Nisbet is able to accuse *Dark Star Park* of being timeless while at the same time instrumentalizing this perceived timelessness to support his critique of its historical commemoration.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 48.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Underscoring how *Dark Star Park* is linked to a “colonial contract” through its connection to William Henry Ross’s acquisition in 1860, Nisbet questions the nature of the park’s solar commemoration and the community celebrations that have emerged surrounding the sculpture. Latching on to the temporal ambiguity permitted by the perceived timelessness of the cyclical nature of *Dark Star Park*’s shadow alignments, Nisbet is also able to detach the work from a particular present, bending and shaping the time of the work to travel “four hundred years” into the past, accusing the work of glossing over the turbulent events of the past four centuries.⁶³ When *Dark Star Park*’s solar alignments are framed in this way as timeless, the work is no longer tied down to a specific moment in time – whether it be August 1, 1860 or any of the many moments in which the work has been experienced since 1984. Almost paradoxically, it is the ambiguity of *timelessness* that permits critics like Nisbet to extrapolate the work’s *historical* aspect into a place of greater prominence – treating it much any other commemorative monument that is aligned solely with a singular notion of historicist time.

Nisbet views *Dark Star Park*’s temporal plurality as a discordant assemblage of times, characterizing the work’s convergence of temporalities as a continuation of Land art’s tradition of glossing over and erasing the historical past.⁶⁴ Evaluating the work’s varied time scales that range from the historical time of Ross’s acquisition, the perceived timelessness of the cycles of

⁶³ Nisbet never clarifies what he refers to by the “past four hundred years,” but one can only assume this relates to his critique of the larger colonial history of the place that stretches before Ross’s arrival in the 19th century.

⁶⁴ Similarly, Nisbet has also highlighted how works of Land art such as Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (1970) focus on geological time in a way that visualizes a temporal coexistence with the prehistoric world which “veil[s] more recent social histories.” Nisbet, *Second Site*, 31. Nisbet also notes how the siting of works of Land art in the American west and the photographs that document them “reverberate with the mythos of that region’s desert expanses as lifeless and timeless landscapes” (XVI). Nisbet’s view echoes other critiques of Land art, such as Jennifer Roberts’s comments that Smithson’s work was shaped by a “brand of primitivism informed by an idea of primordial timelessness” which upheld a “meticulous ethics of passivity in the face of historical injustice.” Jennifer L. Roberts, *Mirror-Travels: Robert Smithson and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 9. See also Scout Hutchinson, “Out of Place: Indigenous Resistance, Cultural Appropriation, and Land Art Histories,” in *Groundswell: Women of Land Art*, ed. Leigh A. Arnold (Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Center; New York: Del Monico Books, D.A.P., 2023), 189-197.

the cosmos, and the urgency of commuting through the neighborhood, Nisbet characterizes the work's temporal plurality as a source of "collision," and "internal contradiction."⁶⁵ Stuck in the idea that the temporal orientations of the work must be one or the other, Nisbet's critique plays into the dialectic of time and timelessness by not acknowledging the possibilities for interaction between the work's mixed temporalities.

If we try to think beyond the dialectic of time and timelessness and attempt to free ourselves from a view of time as only the linear progression of past, present, and future, we might be able to notice the full complexity of the interactions between *Dark Star Park's* varied times. As Rifkin has noted, "Without a notion of supervening, encompassing, and singular time in which all events unfold, there are only disparate temporal formations emerging in their own ways that have shifting effects on each other as they come into contact."⁶⁶ While we might feel stuck in the habit of linear time that teaches us that all temporal formations that are not oriented on a progress-driven line are timeless, Holt proposes a much more complex and sophisticated representation of time's plurality with *Dark Star Park*, and underscores the nuance of interactions between mixed temporal formations coexisting in the present.

I propose that, instead of thinking of *Dark Star Park's* cyclical and linear temporalities as inherently contradictory forces that run against each other, colliding when they meet, we might think of these separate temporal modes as coexisting and intermingling, shaping each other as they touch. Rather than crashing into each other as a result of their irredeemable difference (an interaction that presupposes a singular underlying matrix of "universal" or "neutral" time on which this collision might occur), *Dark Star Park's* multiple temporal modes shift and subtly influence each other. As they are held together in a thickened present, the plurality of times

⁶⁵ Nisbet, *Second Site*, 48.

⁶⁶ Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 17.

united by *Dark Star Park* create a complex temporal object that starts to approach the sense of timefulness Holt first described when reflecting on *Sun Tunnels* in her “Self-Interview” of 1976.

Complicating the Commemoration

Time Loop, Time After Time, Time and Time Again, Time Cycle, Arcing Time, Eon, Time Zone, Timescape. Found in Nancy Holt’s 1983-1984 notebook, these phrases are among a long list of titles she considered for her Arlington sculpture before finally settling on *Dark Star Park*.⁶⁷ Though Holt later explained how the work’s final title emerged from her “consideration of the sun and how, in its lighting of the planet, it casts shadows as well” and the “quality of fallen moons or stars” of the concrete spheres, this list of possible names hints at the ideas of temporal plurality Holt grappled with through when designing the park.⁶⁸ Revealing the interactions between the linear time of social history and the cyclical time of the sun, *Dark Star Park* draws out a heightened consciousness of time’s plurality rather than an erasure of its passing.

The conditions for the commissioning of *Dark Star Park* set the frame for these questions of time, timelessness, and commemoration that Holt worked through in the sculpture. When Holt started working in Arlington, Virginia in 1979, the future site of *Dark Star Park* lay in the middle of a growing business district defined by new office buildings that towered over the nearby Potomac. Sitting just across the river from Washington, DC, a city full of monuments and memorials, Arlington is also home to a number of national monuments. From *Dark Star Park’s*

⁶⁷ Nancy Holt, Notebook, 1983 July 20 - 1984 January. Box 40, Folder 27, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁶⁸ Nancy Holt, *Art in the Public Eye: The Making of Dark Star Park*, 1988, 33 min, color, sound. © Holt/Smithson Foundation / Licensed by Artists Rights Society, New York. Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix, New York and Video Data Bank, Chicago.

traffic island, visitors can see the Washington Monument and the Marine Corps “Iwo Jima” Memorial; and beyond them, Arlington National Cemetery and the Pentagon. Evolving, like all of Holt’s works, out of its site, *Dark Star Park’s* temporal orientations are specific to its location. This time, however, Holt’s work responded not to the “ageless” rock and unending curvature of the planet as in her desert earthwork *Sun Tunnels*, but tall glass buildings, man-made historical monuments, and the speeding cars of an urban neighborhood. As Holt continued to grapple with the uneasiness with time that defined the “chronophobia” of the art of the 1960s, the defensive shield of timelessness which had protected so many works of Land art from facing the history of their place would not hold up here. Emerging from its landscape marked by monuments of historical memory and the fast pace of the neighborhood, *Dark Star Park* integrates historical time with the lived experiences of temporality.

Dark Star Park continues Holt’s signature yearly shadow alignments, activating the cyclical time of seasonal return that characterizes her other celestially aligned sculptures, but adds an element of social history to this alignment. Prior to *Dark Star Park*, the majority of Holt’s sculptures with shadow alignments were calibrated to occur in time with the solar calendar, often shifting into place on the solstices. Holt had already begun to explore alternatives to a purely celestial alignment with *Time Span* (1981) by marking the date of both the sculpture’s completion and her own birthday through the alignment of the work’s shadows. With *Dark Star Park*, however, Holt introduced a specifically historical commemoration for the first time. Within a view of time that defines cyclical time as timeless, historical commemoration may seem incompatible with the cyclical temporality of the sun, but Holt’s deliberate marking of these temporalities through *Dark Star Park’s* shadows represents a much more nuanced view of the interrelation made possible when these two times are brought into contact.

Commemorating William Henry Ross's 1860 acquisition of the land which would become Rosslyn from his father-in-law, *Dark Star Park* marks both the land's identity as property and the precise moment when Ross's name became permanently tied to the place.⁶⁹ Since the first instances of colonial settlement in the region, the ownership of the land which is now Rosslyn has been transferred from hand to hand, with the boundaries that outline its status as property being redefined with each new deed. By the time the 1970s arrived, the parcel of land that would become the northern side of *Dark Star Park*, miniscule in comparison to the wide acres of farmland once owned by Ross, was given back to the public. A bargaining chip in a rapidly urbanizing Rosslyn, *Dark Star Park's* future site began as a public easement granted by a developer in exchange for the permission to transfer the site's density rights to an office building being constructed nearby.⁷⁰ With the *Dark Star Park* site in the hands of the county and Holt, the artist established a commemoration of one man's ownership of the place, setting it up against the long stretches of geological and cosmological time marked in the work's shadows and a comparison to fallen stars.

In choosing the specific, highly local event of Ross's foundational acquisition for commemoration through shadow, Holt entangles the forward-moving time of modern historicism with the cycles of the sun. As it carries the shadows back to their resting places each year on the date of Ross's acquisition, the cyclical time of the sun does not function to, in Nisbet's words, glide past history and negate the passage of time. Nor does it collide violently when set in opposition to the historical time of Rosslyn's past. Rather than formulating a temporal incongruity, Holt points towards the interaction between time's cyclical and linear qualities as

⁶⁹ The precise date, but not actually the precise moment. Ross signed the deed on August 1, but 9:32 a.m. was selected for purely aesthetic reasons. See Adams, "Nancy Holt's 'Dark Star Park.'"

⁷⁰ Marc Kaufman, "Rosslyn: Pitfall of Urban Design," *Washington Star*; June 8, 1980, B-3.

one of coexistence and plurality. In *Dark Star Park*, Holt does not show cyclical time as existing on top of, or working against, historical time. Instead, *Dark Star Park* shows these two times as intermingling, catching on each other as the shadows touch the ground. Bringing the relative brevity of the events of local history in close proximity to the deep time of the sun's relationship to the earth, *Dark Star Park* uses the temporal plurality of the planet as a means to focus perception onto the complexities of commemoration, naming, and ownership. *Dark Star Park* commemorates the colonial histories of land ownership and naming that redefined the landscape of Rosslyn in 1860.⁷¹ But this commemoration is done in passing, in the fleeting alignment of untouchable shadows. This commemoration is also never guaranteed – clouds may always interrupt the sun's interaction with the sculpture. Unlike the grand monuments of traditional statuary (many of which can be seen a short distance away from *Dark Star Park*) which inscribe their commemorations and celebrations onto the landscape permanently, *Dark Star Park's* commemoration is ephemeral, momentary, and transient. Set in contrast to the deep time scales of the universe, *Dark Star Park's* commemoration has a somewhat Ozymandian effect on the history it marks.

While *Dark Star Park's* commemoration was deliberately chosen and specific to the neighborhood, William Henry Ross's 1860 acquisition of the land is an obscure and somewhat mundane historical reference. Thomas Parker, the Arlington County administrator for the *Dark Star Park* project, has noted "in the absence of *Dark Star Park*, it would be a footnote in one of the Arlington history books. Maybe not even that... It grounds Rosslyn in time and space."⁷² Indeed, you do have to look closely to find Ross's name in the Arlington history books, and the

⁷¹ Holt's original plaque explaining the commemoration was lost during the restoration of the park, but a newer plaque has been installed by the county which explains the work's commemorative event.

⁷² Thomas Parker, phone conversation with the author, June 30, 2023.

few pages where his name does appear are dedicated to the etymology of the name Rosslyn. What little is now known about Ross includes the details of his acquisition of the farmland that would later become the neighborhood in 1860, and the fact that he soon fled to France after federal soldiers occupied his land during the Civil War. Ross owned the property only briefly, selling the land in 1869 to the Rosslyn Development Company, which later transformed the area into the “Town of Rosslyn.”⁷³ Though there seems to be relatively few identifiable events to celebrate from Ross’s life, the contract that formed the basis for the neighborhood has become the focus of the park’s solar commemoration. As a timeful object, *Dark Star Park* brings Rosslyn’s history into view, identifying Ross’s acquisition as an essential yet singular part of the time of the place, rather than glossing over it completely in astronomical time(lessness). Neither a celebration of William Henry Ross’s life nor a condemnation of his actions, the park’s transitory shadow commemoration serves as a reminder of the ways Arlington’s specific identity and individual past make up our experiences of the present in that particular place.

Dark Star Park remembers William Henry Ross, but it is not a monument, and the historical time of the work is always interacting with its other temporal formations. This interaction, which is ever-present in the work but materializes most clearly at 9:32 a.m. on August 1, uses temporality to condition the historicity of the place. I am reminded of Christine Ross’s argument that the contemporary artists of the temporal turn suspend the forwardness of moving narratives and images, using lived temporal passing to rearticulate modern historicity as a progressive paradigm.⁷⁴ Though Ross’s study refers to artists of the twenty-first century, Holt’s temporal work in her public sculpture is strikingly similar.

⁷³ “Why do we call it? Rosslyn,” *Arlington Historical Magazine* 8, no. 4, (1986-87): 50.

⁷⁴ Ross, *The Past is the Present*, 8.

While *Dark Star Park's* shadow alignment is not strictly a "suspension" of the forwardness of images or narratives in this sense, the cyclical alignment of the work performs a similar operation. *Dark Star Park* marks the actions of William Henry Ross that led to the neighborhood's adoption of his name. But this happens cyclically, using the lived experiences of temporality guided by the sun to deploy this commemoration, which occurs over and over again, without end. To be clear, this is not the same ambiguous and unchanged "endlessness" that characterizes the accusation of timelessness. Rather than being detached from historical origin and with no identifiable beginning (as in Nisbet's argument, which allows him to use *Dark Star Park's* specific marking of one event as a timeless stand-in for centuries of events that came before it), the interminability of the commemoration of Ross's history marks a forever that started in 1860. Carried in on *Dark Star Park's* shadows, the memory of Ross's acquisition drifts into focus momentarily on August 1, drawing attention to the persistence of past times that linger in the present alongside the contemporary temporal experiences of the sun and daily life. The continuance of historical time in the work is not one that marches forever forwards, but one which is cyclically repeated by *Dark Star Park* in the present, adding texture to the present through the recursive temporality of commemoration.

In the thickened present of a timeful work, there is no possibility of glossing over the past. Instead, these past events *create* the thickness of the present, giving it weight, texture, and form. We cannot forget the time of William Henry Ross, as his name is invoked each time the word "Rosslyn" is uttered, and his acquisition is drawn into renewed focus year after year on August 1. But this historical time is conditioned by our experiences of temporality, lived out in the cycles that bring the shadows back to the park, in the leaching of minerals from the concrete as it ages, in the growth of the park's vegetation, and in the fast pace of commuters. Recurrent

and unending as this history may be, the brief time of Ross's ownership of the property remains eclipsed by the deep time of the universe at this specific place – a time of which Ross remains a necessary part. *Dark Star Park's* commemoration is less a celebration of the specific events of Ross's life or work, and more a direction of our view onto the ways our past shapes the how we live in time. Produced at the intersection of local and cosmic time, *Dark Star Park's* timefulness retains the historical past in the present – it is necessary, it defines how we live, but it is not the only thing that defines our experiences of the present.

A Bit of the Universe

Dark Star Park exists both in time and full of time, but so far, I have examined the work's interactions with temporal multiplicity somewhat narrowly. However, if we are to truly view the work as a timeful object, we must think beyond how its commemorative shadow alignment simply puts the plurality of time on display to think also about how this plurality is actually experienced. Of course, *Dark Star Park* is always experienced over time, made visible in the perpetual shifting of the shadows and the telescopic lines of sight formed as visitors move throughout the park. These perceptual experiences encouraged by the work emerged from the specific temporal character of the landscape of Rosslyn. What has resulted is a tradition of community gathering that entwines a local sense of place with a heightened perception of the varied temporal modes that make up the present.

As Holt entered Arlington, Virginia as she was beginning to realize the limitations of a timeless sculpture, her exploration of the possibilities of a temporally complex work led her to the local history of the county. A suburb of Washington, DC, Arlington's Rosslyn neighborhood

had long been “more of a gateway than a destination.”⁷⁵ One Arlington resident observed how the county’s gateway to the nation’s capital “becomes a ‘dead place’” at night.⁷⁶ Another described the county as “a cold sort of place, very impersonal.”⁷⁷ One citizen, writing in impassioned support for the project that would later become *Dark Star Park*, highlighted Arlington’s lack of public artwork with which to identify, using a travel brochure to illustrate her argument:

Although the bright and pretty brochure that the Arlington Visitors Commission just published is full of pictures, there are only two of Arlington, the county: one of the skyline at Rosslyn and another of that of Crystal City. The other photographs are of the usual set of tourist attractions – the Custis-Lee Mansion, the Kennedy Center. Our biggest promoters couldn’t find a single public monument or building to include that would identify with us the people who live in Arlington. Sad isn’t it?⁷⁸

Seemingly lacking a past of its own, the development of a uniquely Arlingtonian sense of identity and place had been impeded by the fact that the county is filled with national landmarks and monuments that link it inextricably with the District of Columbia, but very few of its own. These monuments are some of the same that Holt visited while planning for *Dark Star Park*: the Arlington Historical Society; Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial; the United States Marine Corps War Memorial and Netherlands Carillon; the Arlington Visitors Commission; and the Smithsonian Institution.⁷⁹ Moreover, the perception of Rosslyn as a gateway to Washington, DC contributed to a view of the neighborhood not as a place in which to spend time, but as a

⁷⁵ Eleanor Lee Reading Templeman, *Arlington Heritage: Vignettes of a Virginia County* (Arlington, VA: self-pub, 1959), 78.

⁷⁶ Carl Hilinkski, “Sculpture Wins Support,” *Northern Virginia Sun*, August 8, 1977.

⁷⁷ Florence B. Higgs, “Public Art – Yes,” *Arlington News*, September 25, 1977.

⁷⁸ Louise Chestnut, “We should have public art here,” *Arlington News*, September 1, 1977. Similarly, the county’s NEA grant application proposed “to place a permanent sculpture of monumental scale at a major entry point to Rosslyn to mark it as a special place.” County Board of Arlington, Virginia, Project Grant Application, National Endowment for the Arts, September 1977. *Dark Star Park* project files, collection Holt/Smithson Foundation, donation from Arlington Public Art, Arlington County, Virginia

⁷⁹ Miscellaneous printed material, 1970s-80s, *Dark Star Park* (1984), Arlington, VA. Box 3, Folder 33, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

place to pass through temporarily. Responding to both Rosslyn's temporal identity as a place of transition and the monumental landscape of the wider area,⁸⁰ Holt's project sought to distill the essence of the place by incorporating "the materials of the place, the built environment, the topography, the psychology of the place, [and] the sociology of the place."⁸¹ Constructing a work of art that would integrate the unique qualities of both the urban site and Rosslyn as a place, Holt sought to engage the county's local identity and past, even as an outsider, becoming a temporary resident of Arlington in the process.

Faced with the monumental landscape of the Washington, DC area, Holt did not construct a sculpture of monumental size, but instead proposed a park of distinctly human scale. Commenting on the rapidly growing and urbanizing neighborhood of Rosslyn, Holt noted, "They'd forgotten about people, so it was a tremendous need, and I felt I was meeting that need."⁸² In centering the human experience of the artwork, *Dark Star Park* fit an emerging definition of public art that, as noted by Lawrence Alloway in 1980, looked beyond the political reference of the commemorative monument or the "style-oriented monumentality" of large scale abstract modernist sculpture towards a more meaningful definition of site-specificity that rests on the basis of participation.⁸³ For some, the invitation to enter the space of the sculpture and participate by looking outward from within made the human presence the element that defined public art as "public."⁸⁴ *Dark Star Park's* human-oriented scale continually involves the

⁸⁰ Responding to a question about her use of concrete in her documentary *Art in the Public Eye*, Holt cites the area's monuments as influences: "It was a bit of a struggle, but I think I was also responding to the other monuments of Washington. I think I was, in a sense, engaging those things as well." Holt, *Art in the Public Eye*.

⁸¹ Holt, *Art in the Public Eye*.

⁸² Nancy Holt, oral history interview by Scott Gutterman, July 6, 1992, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 16.

⁸³ Lawrence Alloway, "Problems of Iconography and Style," in *Urban Encounters: Art, Architecture, Audience*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: The Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 20.

⁸⁴ For more on the category of "the public," see Rosalyn Deutsche, "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy," *Social Text* no. 33 (1992): 34-53.

spectator in the work, inviting pedestrians to enter the park along one of its curving gravel paths, to look into its tunnels and pools, and to observe the shifting shadow patterns on the ground.

As Angela Adams has argued, Holt welcomed the changes that time brought to her work. Holt's choice of permanent materials like concrete, masonry, and steel was informed by a desire, in the artist's words, to "see nature change the works."⁸⁵ This embrace of durational time aligns with critic Jeff Kelley's argument that the "consciousness of time as both an erosive and creative medium" would come to define the public art of the late twentieth century.⁸⁶ Constructed deliberately to welcome these transformations brought by nature's cycles, *Dark Star Park* is not fixed in a temporal stasis, and Holt maintained that "people are the temporary element" of permanent works like *Dark Star Park*.⁸⁷ Rather than the timeless, static, and unwaveringly permanent monument or abstract modernist sculpture, the temporary human participation makes *Dark Star Park* a work that constantly shifts and changes with each visitor over time. Inviting the viewer-turned-participant to engage directly with the work, *Dark Star Park* foregrounds the lived experiences of temporality in its system of temporal marking, experiences that cannot possibly be timeless because we experience time in varied ways. In the fullness of time, what results is not an erasure of time or history, but a greater awareness of the interconnection between them.

In the words of Katherine Freshley, one of the early advocates for the commission that later became *Dark Star Park*, the work's yearly commemoration of Ross's acquisition has "kept the man alive" in the memory of Arlingtonians.⁸⁸ However, this marking has not led to a

⁸⁵ Nancy Holt, oral history interview by Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz, August 3, 1993, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 3.

⁸⁶ Jeff Kelley, "Common Work," in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1994), 144.

⁸⁷ Nancy Holt, "Permanence and Temporality: Nancy Holt," in *Curating Now 05*, eds. Kate Fowle and Shane Aslan Selzer (San Francisco: California College of the Arts, 2004), 22-23.

⁸⁸ Katherine Freshley, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2023, Arlington, VA. As a member of the Arlington County planning commission in 1977, Freshley prepared the county's application for an NEA Art in Public Places grant alongside Steve Weinstock, a county planner.

eneration or celebration of Ross's life or actions, and in actuality, community engagement with the sculpture has upheld an almost neutral commemoration of Rosslyn's founder. Each year, a group of residents return to the sculpture on "*Dark Star Park Day*" (note that August 1 has not earned the name "William Henry Ross Day," "Rosslyn Day" or "Nancy Holt Day"), to witness the shadows align (fig. 2.4). As the shadows shift into place, William Henry Ross's name is hardly uttered, and few people know who Ross was outside the context of *Dark Star Park*. Even when the park was rededicated in 2002 following a five-year restoration, plans to stage a reenactment of Ross's signing of the Rosslyn deed (complete with 1860s period costume) were abandoned to maintain the focus of the rededication event on the work itself, reflecting a stronger interest in the work's marking of time rather than history.⁸⁹

Rather than serving as a monument to Arlington's history, *Dark Star Park's* commemorative function opens up a site for gathering. Each year in the hour before 9:32 a.m., people slowly assemble on *Dark Star Park's* traffic island, unfolding lawn chairs, spreading blankets on the grass. Someone blows bubbles while coffee and pastries are passed around. Self-proclaimed amateur astronomers attempt to explain the science behind the imminent alignment as curious office workers wander down to the park, having seen the assembly of people from the windows of the nearby office buildings. As the crowd anticipates the alignment of the shadows with the outlines on the ground, someone asks, "Whose birthday is it today?" and half a dozen hands shoot up in the air as the audience celebrates their individual cycles around the sun while witnessing the ephemeral commemoration of the history of the land where they now stand.

⁸⁹ Jennifer Riddell, email message to Connie McAdam, July 19, 2002. *Dark Star Park* project files, collection Holt/Smithson Foundation, donation from Arlington Public Art, Arlington County, Virginia. If any one person has been celebrated at *Dark Star Park Day* celebrations, it is (surprisingly) Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia, whose birthday happens to be on August 1, and who also happens to have a popular song titled "Dark Star." A number of tie-dye wearing visitors regularly attend the annual celebration because of this coincidence. See Adams, "Nancy Holt's 'Dark Star Park.'"

Birthdays have always been a part of *Dark Star Park* Day celebrations. When Holt attended one of the work’s first shadow alignments in the 1980s, she interviewed the handful of community members who had gathered for her film, *Art in the Public Eye: The Making of Dark Star Park*. One woman told Holt that she had come to witness the sculpture’s shadow alignment to celebrate her birthday and also “a bit of the universe... I’m part of the universe and part of time.”⁹⁰



Figure 2.4. *Dark Star Park* Day gathering. Arlington, Virginia. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, August 1, 2023, 9:24 a.m., eight minutes before the shadow alignment.

Locating visitors within a wider view of their place on the planet, *Dark Star Park* invokes a timefulness found at the precise meeting point between the smallest, most personal experiences of time, and the distant, immense stretches of the deep time of universe. As this union is rendered perceptible in the annual commemoration of a local event using the cosmic workings of the sun,

⁹⁰ *Dark Star Park* visitor, interviewed in Holt, *Art in the Public Eye*.

Dark Star Park Day celebrations show us how timefulness is lived out. Joined together, these times define the landscape of the place and our experiences within it, filled to the brim with varied temporal modes – the deep, cyclical time of the cosmos, the clock and calendar time that tell us to be at the park at 9:32 a.m. on August 1, the historical time of Rosslyn’s past, and the annual recurrence of our birthdays.



Figure 2.5. Shadow alignment, *Dark Star Park*, Arlington, Virginia. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, August 1, 2023, 9:39 a.m., seven minutes after the shadow alignment.

Chapter 3: *Solar Rotary*

Solar Rotary (1995) sits behind the University of South Florida's Communication and Information Sciences Building in Tampa, at the intersection of four walkways lined with moss-draped live oak trees. At the center of the sculpture's circular concrete plaza, eight aluminum posts rise upwards, meeting twenty feet above the ground to form the twisting rays of a sun, its curving lines converging into a central ring (fig. 3.1). The center of the elevated aluminum sun casts a shadow on the ground beneath it, creating a circle of sunlight that aligns five times each year with bronze plaques inscribed with historical dates (fig. 3.2) set into the concrete plaza:

MARCH 27, 12:18 PM

THE DATE OF THE FIRST REPORTED SIGHTING OF FLORIDA BY AN INHABITANT OF ANOTHER CONTINENT, PONCE DE LEON FROM SPAIN, 1513

AUGUST 14, 3:30 PM

THE DATE THAT THE FIRST MAP OF THE COAST OF FLORIDA WAS SUBMITTED TO LORD HILLSBOROUGH, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES, FOR WHOM THIS COUNTY IS NAMED, 1772

JANUARY 25, 12:12 PM

THE DATE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST TOWN GOVERNMENT OF TAMPA, 1849

SEPTEMBER 5, 4:11 PM

THE DATE FOR THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA, 1958

JULY 20, 10:24 AM

THE DATE THAT THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS LANDED ON THE MOON IN SPACESHIP APOLLO 11, LAUNCHED FROM CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA, 1969

At solar noon on the summer solstice in June, *Solar Rotary's* shadow becomes nearly perfectly vertical, coming to rest around a circular concrete bench inlaid with a meteorite that sits directly below the aluminum sun. A plaque reads:

ON THE DAY OF THE SUMMER SOLSTICE AT SOLAR NOON BETWEEN 1:31 AND 1:32 PM A CIRCLE OF SUNLIGHT WILL BE CAST AROUND THIS CIRCULAR SEAT.



Figure 3.1. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida. Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, August 14, 2023, 3:32 p.m., two minutes after shadow alignment with one of five bronze plaques.

Despite the fact that Holt once described *Solar Rotary* as an embodiment of her “whole lifetime of art,”⁹¹ the work has been largely overlooked in recent scholarship. One reason for this is perhaps because *Solar Rotary*, made relatively late in the artist’s career, stands apart aesthetically from the rest of Holt’s outdoor sculpture. Unlike the solid concrete forms that defined Holt’s earlier work, *Solar Rotary*’s wiry canopy is the result of the artist’s exploration of, in her words, a “freer, more expressive line.”⁹² The few commentators who have addressed *Solar Rotary* have described the work’s engagement with time in comparison to a variety of sculptural precedents, declaring the work to be timeless through a dialogue with the distant past. Critic

⁹¹ Nancy Holt, quoted in Evan Perez, “Castor Christens Solar Rotary,” *USF Oracle*, March 28, 1995, 3.

⁹² Nancy Holt, letter to Vincent Ahern, October 8, 1991. Box 16, Folder: “Correspondence, 1991,” Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Joanne Milani has described *Solar Rotary* as “a time machine of sorts, a moving vehicle linking folks to the distant past by incorporating the sun and an extraterrestrial fragment.”⁹³ Lucy Lippard writes that the sculpture’s aluminum frame, with its ever-moving shadows, “suggests an ancient solar instrument,” connecting Holt’s meditation on time with early methods of solar timekeeping.⁹⁴ Critic Anne Barclay Morgan echoes this reading of the sculpture, commenting that the work’s “ancient forms” are reminiscent of both “sacred Native American grounds” and the medieval sundial.⁹⁵ Morgan concludes her article, “In this sense, her extraordinary work is timeless,” continuing this popular yet misguided characterization of the temporality of the artist’s work.⁹⁶ Apart from linking the sculpture to timekeeping methods of the past, little attention has been given to *Solar Rotary*, and even less to the particularities of the work’s dynamic network of intersecting modes of temporal marking.

These accusations of *Solar Rotary*’s timelessness are mischaracterizations shaped by a system which favors linear time and leaves little room for the recognition of other temporalities. By casting *Solar Rotary* as timeless, these comparisons to historical precedents become oversimplifications of the way the work traces a web of varied temporal formations. I propose that we think beyond these characterizations of the artist’s work. *Solar Rotary*’s shadow events represent the height of Holt’s signature temporal marking, resulting in a highly complex commemorative object that balances the artist’s interest in the interactions between solar and

⁹³ Joanne Milani, “The Art of Revolution,” *Tampa Tribune*, March 25, 1995.

⁹⁴ Lucy R. Lippard, “Tunnel Visions: Nancy Holt’s Art in the Public Eye” in *Nancy Holt: Sightlines*, ed. Alena J. Williams (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 64. Lippard’s reading of *Solar Rotary* draws heavily on an unedited version of a 2007 interview between Holt and James Meyer. The edited version of the interview, which was published in *Nancy Holt: Sightlines*, omits the majority of the artist’s comments about *Solar Rotary*.

⁹⁵ Jack Robinson, the astronomer who worked on *Solar Rotary* and his brother once used *Solar Rotary* as a sun dial and found it to be relatively accurate. Jack Robinson, interview by Vincent Ahern in “Chartering the Circle of Light,” July 5, 1995, recording, Archives of the Public Art Program, Institute for Research in Art, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

⁹⁶ Anne Barclay Morgan, “Site: Nancy Holt,” *Sculpture*, January 1996, 14-15.

historical time. Art historian Julie Alderson has argued for *Solar Rotary's* importance in Holt's oeuvre, claiming that "It is through this project that Holt's interests in generating awareness of issues related to vision, time and place are most fully known."⁹⁷ Underscoring how "Time becomes the generating force of *Solar Rotary's* meaning," Alderson emphasizes the work's perceptual linkages between time and place through the local dates it commemorates.⁹⁸ Building on Alderson's recognition of the importance of Holt's conceptual engagement with time in *Solar Rotary*, I argue that it is specifically the interaction between social history and geological and solar time which creates the work's temporal sophistication.

Building on an exploration of non-linear formations of time first highlighted by works like *Sun Tunnels*, *Time Span*, and *Dark Star Park*, Holt's search for the sculptural vocabulary with which to articulate her ideas about temporal multiplicity reached its height in *Solar Rotary's* waving shadows. Continuing Holt's investigation of a timeful sculpture, *Solar Rotary* unites three senses of time, employing the cycles of the sun to mark both a sequence of historical dates and the deeper scales of astronomical and geological time. As *Solar Rotary's* shadows dance across the concrete plaza, they find their way back to their designated spots year after year, repeatedly tracing a line of modern historical progress while the work's cyclical and ephemeral elements work to complicate and nuance the rule of future-driven historical time. Expanding on strategies for uniting multiple modes of temporal marking first introduced by *Dark Star Park*, *Solar Rotary* brings history into contact with the fullness and texture of the temporal experiences of the present. Resisting the terms of perceived timelessness, *Solar Rotary's* timeful invocation of intersecting times also permits a more pointed critique of the progress of modern historical time.

⁹⁷ Julie Alderson, "Nancy Holt's *Solar Rotary*: Casting Light on Florida History" (2004): 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

From 1492 to 1992

After the public art program at the University of South Florida (USF) selected Holt's proposal for the university's newest Art in State Buildings commission, a team was assembled to help finalize plans for the work's commemorative elements.⁹⁹ Among this team of university faculty and staff were Vincent Ahern, Coordinator of Public Art, USF Contemporary Art Museum; Paul Camp, Assistant Director of Special Collections, USF Library; and Jack Robinson, USF Professor Emeritus and archeoastronomer.¹⁰⁰ This research group assembled a chronological list of 77 possible dates for commemoration by Holt's work, beginning with the first sighting of Florida by Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León in 1513 and ending with the publication of the first issue of the USF student newspaper, *The Oracle*, in 1966.¹⁰¹

Completed over ten years after Holt's first historical marking in *Dark Star Park*, the dates selected for commemoration by *Solar Rotary* reflect the contemporary issues of the 1990s, including those surrounding the 1992 quincentenary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas in 1492. Clippings assembled by Holt in her project files for *Solar Rotary* reveal a careful consideration of the implications of the historical dates she selected from the original list of 77. Headlines from a 1993 clipping from *The Tampa Tribune* read "Indians promise to stop

⁹⁹ Florida's Art in State Buildings program mandates that one half of one percent of the construction budget for new public buildings built using state funds be allocated for artwork. *Solar Rotary* was funded by the Florida's Art in State Buildings program and a contribution from the *Tampa Tribune*. *Nancy Holt: Solar Rotary, Tampa Tribune Plaza, University of South Florida*, brochure produced by the University of South Florida on the occasion of the work's dedication on March 27, 1995. Box 6, Folder 17, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁰⁰ Vincent Ahern, memorandum to Mel Anderson, Paul Camp, Donna Dickerson, Rex Ledo, Bernard Mackey, Janet Marquardt-Cherry, Margaret A. Miller, Gary Mormino, Thomas Ness, Kathy Perez, Lloyd Pettegrew, Paul Stavros, Jeanne Terio, Ana Troncoso, Carol Williams, James R. Williams, Ron Wolfe, and Henry Woodroffe, May 25, 1995, "Research meeting, Nancy Holt project, BR-516." Box 6, Folder 10, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁰¹ "Possible Dates for Nancy Holt Project," June 23, 1993. Box 6, Folder 10, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

parade” and “De Soto parade draws fire from American Indian activists.”¹⁰² Another article from *The New York Times* about the discovery of a long-lost Spanish fort in St. Augustine, the earliest permanent European settlement in the United States, was faxed from Holt to Vincent Ahern, reflecting further the consideration of the legacies of Florida’s colonial past that went into the work.¹⁰³



Figure 3.2. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida (detail, bronze historical plaque). Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, 2023.

Solar Rotary's timefulness is responsive not only to the events of Florida’s history that it commemorates, but also to the historical conditions and concerns of the 1990s. Designing *Solar Rotary* in 1993, one year after the quincentenary of Columbus’ voyage to the Americas, Holt was

¹⁰² Rick Barry, “Indians promise to stop parade,” *Tampa Tribune*, July 17, 1993. Box 6, Folder 11, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁰³ John Noble Wilford, “Long-Lost Spanish Fort Found in St. Augustine,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1993. Box 6, Folder 11, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. An article about *Solar Rotary's* planning noted that “A committee is working out the kinks. Friday, they discussed the selection of historical dates to spotlight, sensitive that parts of history dealing with European conquest of Florida could offend American Indians. It’s that kind of discussion, and the inclusion of such a variety of subjects, that seems to intrigue Holt.” Michael Fetcher, “Sculpture to shine with sun,” *Tampa Tribune*, July 17, 1993.

sensitive to the fact that the commemoration of violent conquistadors like Hernando de Soto and Juan Ponce de León might inspire resistance. On a list of notes for a meeting related to the work, Holt identified her priorities in selecting these dates, noting “Research of important historical dates to be designated. Dates should go back as far as possible and include native American dates.”¹⁰⁴ Though the final dates selected did not include the full breadth of Florida’s history, these notes and clippings demonstrate the ways in which Holt was informed by a growing awareness of the legacies of colonialism in the years surrounding the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in the Americas.

Along with these documents, Holt’s archive also contains excerpts from critic Robert Hughes’ 1993 book, *The Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* that the artist shared with Ahern, accompanied with a note that the excerpts contained “ideas that may come to be useful if a Euro-date is used for ‘Solar Rotary,’” perhaps referring to the dates that related to the European colonization of Florida that were included on the list.¹⁰⁵ In one of the sections highlighted by Holt, Hughes quotes a passage from the Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado’s reflection on the quincentenary, who wrote that, for some, the celebrations represented,

the epic of discovery, the meeting of two worlds, for others, the infamy of the *conquista* and of genocide... One must set up and compare appearances and differences, because only in this way, by understanding what was great and will be an eternal glory, by disclosing what was wretched and will be a perpetual shame, only thus, in reflection and understanding, can we both celebrate the epic and condemn the massacre, neither of which expunges the other. We are the product of both – the mixed peoples of America.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Nancy Holt, “Solar Rings: Some questions for the teleconference on Thursday,” n.d. Box 6, Folder 11, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁰⁵ Nancy Holt, fax transmittal form to Vincent Ahern, October 5, 1993. Box 6, Folder 12, Nancy Holt Estate records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁰⁶ Jorge Amado, “El embeleso colonialista,” *El Pais*, July 23, 1992. Quoted in Robert Hughes, *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 121.

Other highlighted sections mirror this call for taking a more nuanced view of America's colonial past instead of solely celebrating or condemning this history. Another passage starred by Holt in her fax to Ahern underscores Hughes' views on multiculturalism in the United States:

The social richness of America, so striking to the foreigner, comes from the diversity of its tribes. Its capacity for cohesion, for some spirit of common agreement on what is to be done, comes from the willingness of those tribes not to elevate their cultural differences into impassable barriers and ramparts, not to fetishize their "African-ness" or *Italianità*, which make them distinct, at expense for their Americanness, which gives them a vast common ground. Reading America is like scanning a mosaic. If you only look at the big picture, you do not see its parts – the distinct glass tiles, each a different color. If you concentrate only on the tiles, you cannot see the picture.¹⁰⁷

These matters of multiculturalism, in unison with the controversy over the Columbus quincentenary celebrations, serve as a backdrop for Holt's work on *Solar Rotary*. Raising questions about the nature of commemoration in the years following the 500th anniversary of Columbus's journey, particularly the commemoration of those who colonized the Americas, these issues shaped the temporal work performed by *Solar Rotary's* ephemeral commemorative structure.

With these considerations in mind, it becomes difficult to imagine how the notion of timelessness might ever come to approximate the temporal character of *Solar Rotary*. The work is neither timeless in form nor function. Rather than a simple reference to the timekeeping methods of the past, *Solar Rotary* is distinctly a product of the historical moment of the 1990s, shaped by a sharpening awareness of the legacies of Florida's past. Neither does *Solar Rotary's* engagement of the cyclical and recursive temporality of the sun deploy a timelessness as a means of occluding or glossing over the history of the place. Grounded firmly in the moment of the 1990s, *Solar Rotary* declares its place as one formed by a range of historical contingencies that are brought into focus through its marking of varied heterogeneous temporalities.

¹⁰⁷ Hughes, *Culture of Complaint*, 14.

As the work unites a series of deliberately chosen local dates, *Solar Rotary's* temporal critique is found precisely at the intersection between historical events and the temporality of the sun. Beginning with a date from the very beginning of Florida's colonial history, Holt traces a future-driven narrative of progress relating to the history of colonial conquest and mapping, and the subsequent foundational moments of the establishment of the town government and the university. Informed, in part, by the concerns surrounding the Columbus quincentenary, *Solar Rotary* marks the history of Juan Ponce de León, another conquistador whose arrival began a period of violent conquest in the area. As in *Dark Star Park*, Holt complicates this commemoration by using ephemeral, recursive, and cyclical means to mark the date of Ponce de León's arrival in Florida, placing the conquistador's memory in the focus for only a few seconds before the shadow shifts or fades away. Linking this event to a string of other loosely related local events, *Solar Rotary* distributes its commemoration across the history of the place, rather than fixating on a single foundational moment. Performed within the cyclical time of the sun, this marking positions each individual event as both an essential part of the larger history of the place which adds weight to the present each time it is marked, but also as a transient and temporary moment, its significance minimized when placed in perspective with the vastness of geological and celestial time.

Driven by a cyclical temporality, *Solar Rotary* commemorates a progression of moments that have shaped the social history of Tampa and the surrounding region, placing them within a timeful present that refuses to elide their occurrence or their legacy. At the same time, the multiplicity of the work's temporal marking frames these events within the deeper timescales of cosmic time, minimizing and troubling the regime of historicity they uphold. *Solar Rotary* also reintroduces the marking of the solstices to the commemorative work, using the same solar

mechanism to mark the yearly occurrence of the summer solstice as it does to mark the series of local historical dates, leveling the field between earthly and celestial events while opening up the relation between these two temporal formations. Each time *Solar Rotary's* circle of sunlight returns to mark a date, the work maps the linear time of social history and the time of the cosmos together, coexisting, rather than measuring one against the other.

A Universal Time

In an oral history interview with Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz for the Archives of American Art recorded in August 1993, at the same time she was working on *Solar Rotary*, Holt still struggled to assign words her interest in time, noting her pursuit of “a more universal sense of time... really, I'm concerned with that kind of natural time, or cyclical time, because it's closer to what I'm really interested in, which is no time.” Later in the interview, Holt continued stumble over the words to articulate her complex ideas regarding temporal plurality, speculating: “But the time of the sun – natural time – it's closer to that kind of timeless state. It's not clock time. You know, it's not our busy, worldly time.”¹⁰⁸ As she sought to draw attention to this idea of a natural, universal time in her work, Holt's search for the sculptural means to articulate this interest can be seen in *Solar Rotary's* network of temporal marking.

Though Holt equates universal time, no time, cyclical time, and timelessness in her words, the sculptural manifestation of this work resists this reductive association between universal time and timelessness. To be clear, Holt's use of “universal time” is different from the imposition of linear time as a universal temporal mode as Rifkin and Nguyen have argued. Instead, Holt's “universal time” refers to the time *of* the universe as the final measure of time,

¹⁰⁸ Nancy Holt, oral history interview by Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz, August 3, 1993, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 3-4.

rather than clock and calendar time. Though Holt grasps at the terms “timeless” and “no time” to refer to the natural and cyclical time of the universe and the sun, “no time” might be better understood as “no *single* time” – a rejection of the single, universal, calendar time which created the dialectic of time and timelessness. Within this system, the time of the universe cannot be measured by “our busy, worldly time,” leading to a view of the time of the universe as timeless. In its overlapping of cyclical, linear, and deep time, *Solar Rotary* begins to approach the sense of universal time that interested the artist. *Solar Rotary*’s timeful articulation of a thickened present suggests that this universal time, instead of reflecting an empty timelessness or “no time,” might instead be better defined as the coincidence of the mixed temporalities underlying the present. In this sense, universal time is not one single time, but a coming together of different times, the final arbiter of which is the temporality of the universe rather than the singular measure of the clock and calendar.

At the same time that it marks universal time as the time of the universe in which we live, the sculpture marks the processes of colonization, conquest, mapping, and naming that shaped the area – the same systems that have resulted in the solidification of clock and calendar time as the singular “real” time that is made to *appear* natural and universal. As *Solar Rotary* marks Juan Ponce de León’s arrival in Florida, it commemorates the Spanish conquest of the Americas. Other solar events mark the foundational moments that redefined the landscape of the region: the date that the first map of the coast of Florida was submitted to the British Secretary of State, the date of the establishment of the town government of Tampa, and the date of the groundbreaking of the university. Marking the colonial processes that have given way to the establishment of linear time as the ruling temporal order in the modern western world, *Solar Rotary* also reveals the texture of the mixed temporalities that these historical processes have smoothed over. In

harnessing the plurality of time by commemorating five historical dates and the summer solstice using the sun's cycles of seasonal return, *Solar Rotary's* sense of "universal time" does not reveal itself to be a rigid, ever-advancing line of historical progress nor the eternal timelessness of cosmological magnitudes, but the coexistence and relation across these temporal formations and others. As *Solar Rotary* unites local history with something much bigger, its timefulness works to disturb the historicist regime that has made future-driven progress the focus of our temporal attention. *Solar Rotary's* timefulness is one that refocuses our awareness of time onto the notion that we are not only subject to the singularity of our locality, but also to the planetary.

Reflecting on her intentions for *Solar Rotary's* commemorative structure and temporal marking, Holt wrote:

These historic plaques encourage participation in a shared human history throughout the centuries. I also hoped that visitors interacting with *Solar Rotary* might consider their own relationship to the solar system and – extending out from there – to the entire universe.¹⁰⁹

Here, Holt articulates her interest in promoting a consciousness of one's place in the universe, a central component of *Solar Rotary's* temporal work achieved both by its ephemeral commemorations through the sun's cycles and a fixed astronomical touchstone. Hoping to direct visitors' perceptions outwards to their place on the planet and in the solar system, Holt coordinated a site where "the university is both geologically and astronomically concentrated at this one place on the planet"¹¹⁰ Beneath the sculpture's slightly off-center ring, the circular concrete seat holds in its center a 4.5-billion-year-old meteorite, which fell to the earth in Dade County, Florida (fig. 3.3). Made using sand from the four corners of the university, this bench brings the recent history of the university together with the much deeper history of the universe.

¹⁰⁹ Nancy Holt, "Solar Rotary," in *Nancy Holt: Sightlines*, ed. Alena J. Williams (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 152.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

On the summer solstice, the aluminum canopy's circular shadow surrounds the bench, stitching together the time of the cosmos with the time of the planet in a cycle of seasonal recurrence. Inviting visitors' consideration of their place within the deep time scales of the universe, Holt assigns a playful voice to the meteorite: "Touch me, I'm four and a half billion years old and I've fallen out of the sky."¹¹¹ While the shadows of *Solar Rotary* are optical, untouchable, and transient, its meteorite is permanent. In the sun, it is hot to the touch – material evidence of the actual connections between the earth and the universe that stretches beyond it. Brought into proximity with the marking of local historical dates, it serves as a reminder of the place of human history as it comes into contact with the deep time of the universe.

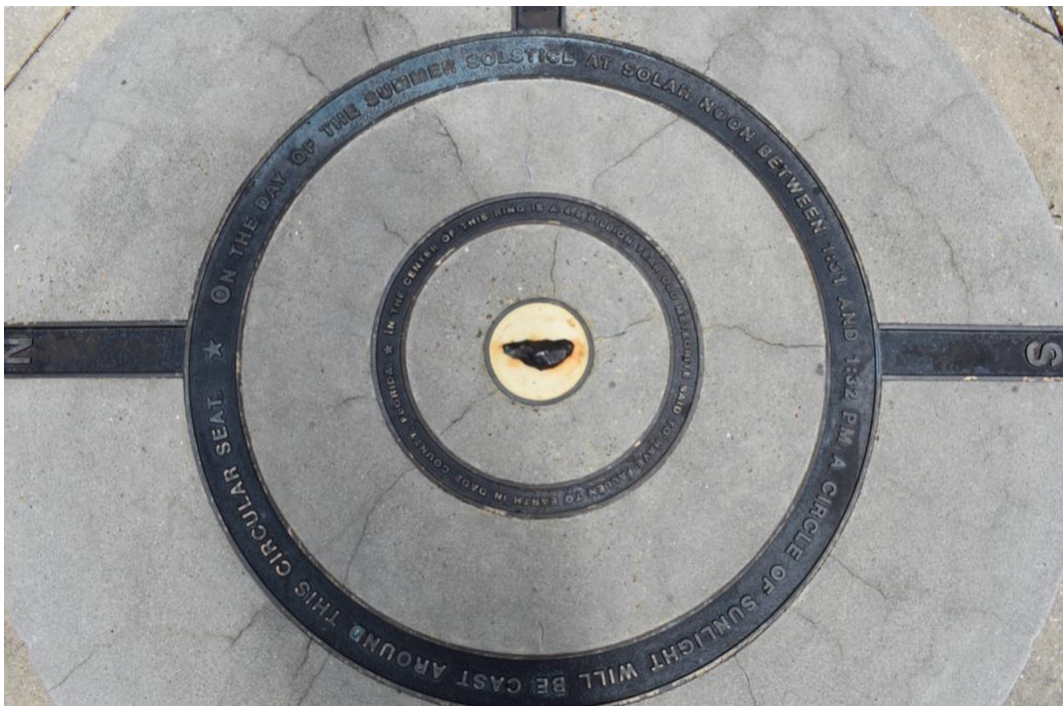


Figure 3.3. Nancy Holt, *Solar Rotary*, 1995, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida (detail, central seat). Photo: Krystyna Piccorossi, 2023.

Solar Rotary's meteorite is not the only way the work connects the specific location of Tampa to the time of the universe. The work's final historical commemoration marks the 1969

¹¹¹ Nancy Holt, in an unedited version of James Meyer's 2007 interview with Holt, quoted in Lucy R. Lippard, "Tunnel Visions: Nancy Holt's Art in the Public Eye," in *Nancy Holt Sightlines*, 64.

launch of the Apollo 11 mission from Cape Canaveral, Florida, continuing *Solar Rotary's* promotion of a planetary consciousness. In a 1995 interview with Vincent Ahern recorded after *Solar Rotary's* completion, Holt cited the voyages to the moon as a factor that motivated and transformed her work and that of her contemporaries:

In 1969, with the moonshot and the photographs that came back showing the earth as a finite entity, it was something that had to be considered in a different light ... it made us realize that the earth was very precious and also a place to be reexplored and reclaimed in the places where it had been destroyed.¹¹²

This view of the earth from space was widely circulated by photographs like *Earthrise*, taken during the 1968 Apollo 8 mission, and the 1972 *Blue Marble* photograph taken during the Apollo 17 mission. As Ursula K. Heise has argued in her 2008 book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, these images of the “Blue Planet” led to a holistic, unified view of the earth as a whole that shaped the emergent environmental movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹¹³ This new vision of the earth was frequently coupled with “a sense that the Earth’s inhabitants, regardless of their national and cultural differences, are bound together by a global ecosystem whose functioning transcends humanmade borders.”¹¹⁴ What accompanied this utopian view of planetary harmony and unity was sometimes an erasure of political and cultural difference. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, defining what she terms “planetarity,” takes up this issue in her book *Death of a Discipline*. Spivak proposes that the planet overwrite the globe, a process that would require a rethinking of our place on the planet, as well as our relation to its other inhabitants: “If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, alterity

¹¹² Nancy Holt, interview by Vincent Ahern, September 12, 1995, recording, Archives of the Public Art Program, Institute for Research in Art, University of South Florida.

¹¹³ Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away.”¹¹⁵

Solar Rotary asks viewers to look up at the sculpture’s canopy, but also down at the shadows on the ground, mirroring the actions of the Apollo 11 astronauts’ views of the earth from above. Linking the historical commemoration of the Apollo 11 mission with the central meteorite touchstone, *Solar Rotary* encourages a perception of the earth as a planet. *Solar Rotary’s* temporal critique works to join a planetary consciousness of the earth beyond humanmade global divisions with the history of colonial action that worked to divide the land and impose the regime of linear historicism that the work uncovers. Marking the historical moments that have traced patterns of divisions on the globe alongside the deep time scales of the universe, *Solar Rotary’s* temporal multiplicity joins the senses of local and planetary place. The marking of these events is conditioned by the time of the universe, which is at once permanent and ephemeral. These commemorations will occur for as long as the sun remains to hang in the sky, yet they only come into focus briefly once each year. This marking is made possible only by the delicate balance between the earth and the sun, a relationship whose age seems to be far beyond the reaches of our imagination. But it is not a timeless one. As *Solar Rotary’s* network of temporal marking helps us to discern the coincidence and relation between time’s varied formations, it becomes just a bit easier for us to feel for the contours, depths, and proximities of a universal time.

¹¹⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 73.

Conclusion

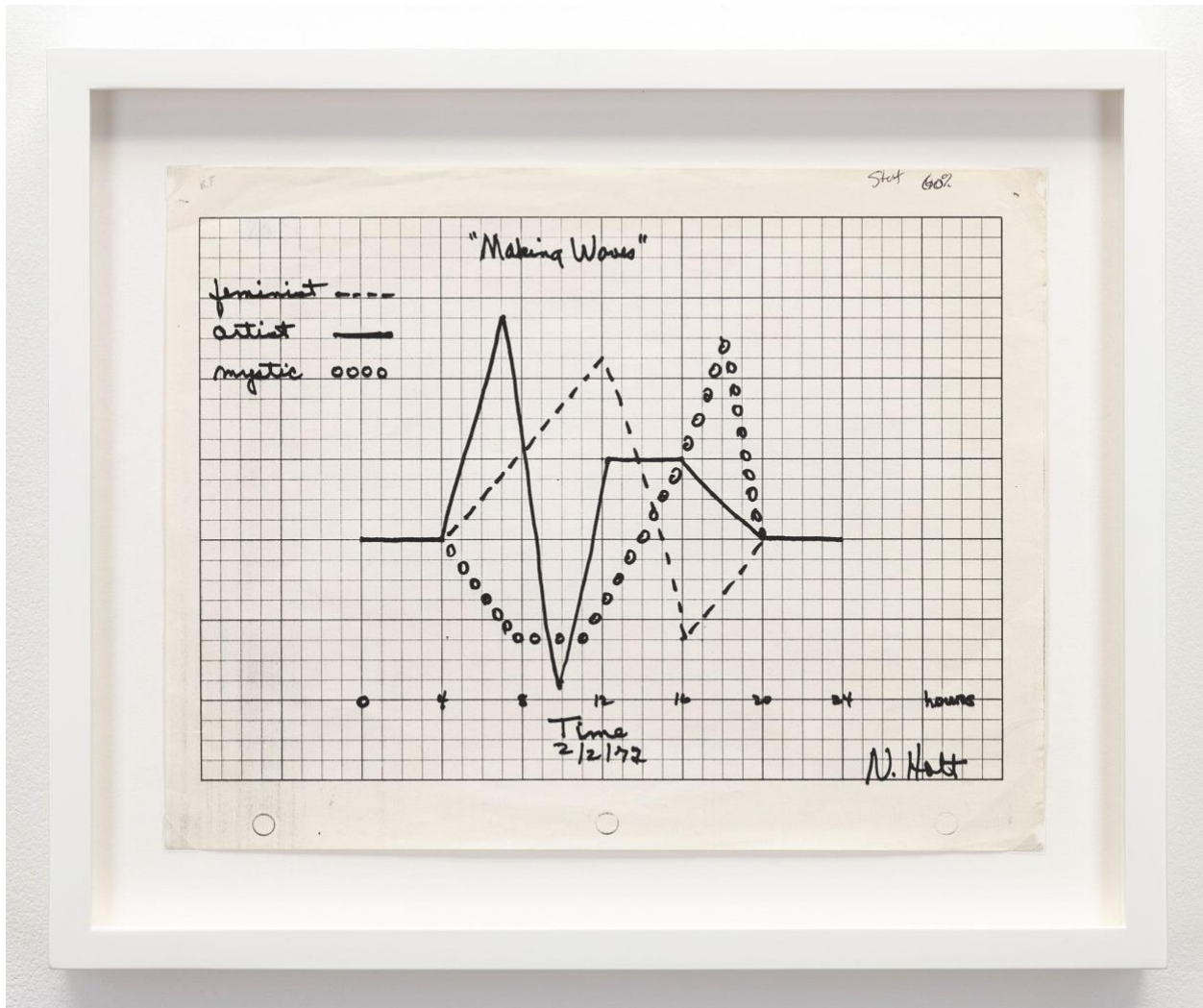


Figure 4.1. Nancy Holt, *Making Waves*, 1972. Ink on paper. 8 1/2 x 11 in (21.6 x 27.9 cm).

Feminist. Artist. Mystic. In Nancy Holt's concrete poem *Making Waves* (1972), these identities begin as one, but split apart, rising and falling over time, crossing over each other before converging back into unison at the end of the day. Mapping time onto paper, Holt traces the varied ways she exists in time, which drift in and out of contact, separate but together. As each day ends, another begins, and the cycle of time repeats. This poem was published, along with a set of Holt's other previously unpublished concrete poems, in a 1980 issue of the literary magazine *Chelsea*. In a statement that accompanied the publication, Holt identified the roots of her later work in these early "visual/verbal" pieces, noting her interests in cyclical time,

synchronicities, repeats, and doubles. Reflecting on these precursors to her sculptural work, the artist commented, “I have uncovered to myself the fact of actually having a visually recorded ‘past’ in continuity with a ‘present.’”¹¹⁶ These early works reveal Holt’s conceptualization of the relationship between the past and the present as one of persistence and continuity, rather than pure succession. From the very first poems she composed to the sculptures, films, and installation projects of her later career, Holt was always thinking through time, and about the multiplicities which make up the present.

In continuity with these interests of her past, Holt’s later public sculptures focus perception onto a time that is filled with the texture of varied temporalities shifting in and out of contact. Integrating multiple temporal orientations, these works formulate a timeful present, a present that is historically and locationally specific. Resisting the label of timelessness, *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* ask us to question the premises on which this description is based. Joining time (in its myriad lived formations) with history, the timefulness of Holt’s later work invites us to consider the many ways we exist in time, in a world made by (and of) time.

As art historians, I and others situated Holt’s work within the successive progression of the history of art, stretching from the distant past to the emerging future. Though we have chronologized her work, Holt’s sculpture challenges the hegemony of linear time on which art history is based by insisting on a temporal plurality. While I have mapped Holt’s works onto the forward-moving flow of art history, *Dark Star Park* and *Solar Rotary* teach us to be wary of a narrative which portrays time as always and only the linear time of history and remember the diverse ways we encounter time (and her works) in the present.

¹¹⁶ Nancy Holt, “Notes on a Few Coincidences of Art and Life” and four early concrete poems, 1969-1972, *Chelsea* no. 39, *Ambimedia Issue* (1980): 173.

This is not to say that art history always comes up short when it comes to works like Holt's. In defining the temporal turn, Christine Ross has noted that the field's definition of "contemporaneity," which highlights a coexistence of historicities, "has the merit of referring to the main operation of the temporal turn: *the unique meeting of two temporalities: the lived and historical passages of time.*"¹¹⁷ I have argued that Holt's later public sculptures preempt the temporal turn Ross is describing precisely because they draw attention to the meeting point between these lived and historical formations of time. Expanding on her view of the contemporaneity of the temporal turn, Ross also cites Terry Smith's contention that "the contemporary signifies multiple ways of being with, in, and out of time, separately and at once, with others and without them."¹¹⁸ Though Holt felt the modernist attraction to the simplicity and singularity of timelessness, universal time, or "no time," her public sculpture asks us to do something different, to take a breath and draw awareness to these multiple ways of being with, in, and out of time by "sharing air, like an atmospheric bellows, with all the other beings on the planet."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Ross, *The Past is the Present*, 49.

¹¹⁸ Terry Smith, "Creating Dangerously, Then and Now," in *The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society* (Second International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville), ed. Okwui Enwezor (Seville: Fundación Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo de Sevilla, 2006): 120, quoted in Ross, *The Past is the Present*, 50.

¹¹⁹ Nancy Holt, quoted in James Meyer, "Interview with Nancy Holt," 220.

Bibliography

- Ables, Kelsey. "Once a year, the shadows in Arlington's Dark Star Park align. This year, it feels especially profound." *Washington Post*, July 29, 2020.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/museums/once-a-year-the-shadows-in-arlingtons-dark-star-park-align-this-year-it-feels-especially-profound/2020/07/29/8a7a460c-d00f-11ea-8c55-61e7fa5e82ab_story.html.
- Adams, Angela Anderson. "Nancy Holt's Dark Star Park." Holt/Smithson Foundation, September 2020. <https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/nancy-holts-dark-star-park>.
- Alderson, Julie. "Nancy Holt's *Solar Rotary*: Casting Light on Florida History." (2004).
- Alloway, Lawrence. "Problems of Iconography and Style." In *Urban Encounters: Art, Architecture, Audience*, Exh. Cat., 15-20. Philadelphia.: The Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1980.
- Amado, Jorge. "El embeleso colonialista." *El Pais*, July 23, 1992.
- Archives of the Public Art Program, Institute for Research in Art, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.
- Arnold, Leigh A., ed. *Groundswell: Women of Land Art*. Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Center; New York: Del Monico Books, D.A.P., 2023.
- Barry, Rick. "Indians promise to stop parade." *Tampa Tribune*, July 17, 1993.
- Bennett, Tony. *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution Museums Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Bjornerud, Marcia. *Timefulness: How Thinking Like a Geologist Can Help Save the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Butterfield, Rebecca A. "Colonizing the Past: Archaic Reference and the Archaeological Paradigm in Contemporary American Earth Art." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1998.
- Chestnut, Louise. "We should have public art here." *Arlington News*, September 1, 1977.
- Dark Star Park* project files, collection Holt/Smithson Foundation, donation from Arlington Public Art, Arlington County, Virginia.
- Deutsche, Rosalyn. "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy." *Social Text*, no. 33 (1992): 33-53.
- Eddy, Jordan. "The Celestial Alignments of Nancy Holt." *Hyperallergic*, April 9, 2023.
<http://hyperallergic.com/813560/the-celestial-alignments-of-nancy-holt/>.

- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Fetcher, Michael. "Sculpture to shine with sun." *Tampa Tribune*, July 17, 1993.
- Fried, Michael. "Art and Objecthood." *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 12-23.
- Hamill, Sarah. "30 Below." Holt/Smithson Foundation, February 2021. <https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/30-below-0>.
- Harootunian, Harry. "Remembering the Historical Present." *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 471–94.
- Harris, Alicia. "Homescapes: Indigenous Land Art and Public Memory." PhD diss, University of Oklahoma, 2020. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/324368>.
- Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Higgs, Florence B. "Public Art – Yes." *Arlington News*, September 25, 1977.
- Hilinski, Carl. "Sculpture Wins Support." *Northern Virginia Sun*, August 8, 1977.
- Holt, Nancy. *Art in the Public Eye: The Making of Dark Star Park*, 1988, 33 min, color, sound. © Holt/Smithson Foundation / Licensed by Artists Rights Society, New York. Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix, New York and Video Data Bank, Chicago.
- . "Notes on a Few Coincidences of Art and Life" and four early concrete poems, 1969-1972. *Chelsea* no. 39, Ambimedia Issue (1980): 171-186.
- . "Permanence and Temporality: Nancy Holt." In *Curating Now 05*, edited by Kate Fowle and Shane Aslan Selzer, 22–23. San Francisco: California College of the Arts, 2004.
- . "Sun Tunnels." *Artforum* 15, no. 8 (April 1977): 32–37.
- . "The Time Being (For Robert Smithson)." *Arts Magazine* 52, no. 9, Special Issue: Robert Smithson (May 1978): 144.
- Hughes, Robert. *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Periodizing the 60s." *Social Text* no. 9/10 (Spring-Summer 1984): 178–209.
- Kaufman, Marc. "Rosslyn: Pitfall of Urban Design." *Washington Star*, June 8, 1980.
- Kelly, Jeff. "Common Work." In *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, edited by Suzanne Lacy, 139-148. Seattle: Bay Press, 1994.
- Krauss, Rosalind. "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." *October* 8 (1979): 30–44.

- Lee, Pamela M. *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.
- Le Feuvre, Lisa, and Katarina Pierre, eds. *Nancy Holt / Inside Outside*. New York: Monacelli, 2022.
- Lippard, Lucy R. *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.
- Liu, Jasmine. “What Do Native Artists Think of Michael Heizer’s New Land Art Work?” *Hyperallergic*, September 21, 2021. <https://hyperallergic.com/763203/what-do-native-artists-think-of-michael-heizers-new-land-art-work/>.
- McPhee, John. *Basin and Range*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981.
- Milani, Joanne. “The Art of Revolution.” *Tampa Tribune*, March 25, 1995.
- Morgan, Anne Barclay. “Site: Nancy Holt.” *Sculpture*, January 1996.
- Nancy Holt Estate records, circa 1900-2014. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- Nguyen, Dan Thu. “The Spatialization of Metric Time: The Conquest of Land and Labour in Europe and the United States.” *Time & Society* 1, no. 1 (January 1992): 29–50.
- Nisbet, James. *Second Site*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Oral history interview with Nancy Holt, 1993 Aug. 3. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- Oral history interview with Nancy Holt, 1992 July 6. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- Perez, Evan. “Castor Christens Solar Rotary.” *USF Oracle*, March 28, 1995.
- Rifkin, Mark. *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.
- Rigaud, Antonia. “Disorienting Geographies: Land Art and the American Myth of Discovery.” *Miranda* 6 (2012): <https://doi.org/10.4000/miranda.2955>.
- Robbins, Christa Noel. “The Sensibility of Michael Fried.” *Criticism* 60, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 429–454.
- Roberts, Jennifer L. *Mirror-Travels: Robert Smithson and History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Ross, Christine. *The Past is the Present; It’s the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art*. New York: Continuum, 2012.

- Smith, Terry. *Art to Come: Histories of Contemporary Art*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.
- . “Creating Dangerously, Then and Now.” In *The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society* (Second International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville), edited by Okwui Enwezor, 114-129. Seville: Fundación Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo de Sevilla, 2006.
- . “Introduction: The Contemporaneity Question.” In *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, edited by Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee, 1–19. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Taylor, Larry M. “Indigenous Minimalism: Native Interventions.” In *Double Desire: Transculturation and Indigenous Contemporary Art*, edited by Ian McLean, 139–55. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- Templeman, Eleanor Lee Reading, *Arlington Heritage: Vignettes of a Virginia County*. Arlington, VA: Self-published, 1959.
- “Why Do We Call It? Rosslyn.” *Arlington Historical Magazine* 8, no. 4 (1986-187): 50-51.
- Wilford, John Noble. “Long-Lost Spanish Fort Found in St. Augustine.” *New York Times*, July 27, 1993.
- Williams, Alena J., ed. *Nancy Holt: Sightlines*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2011.