

Revisiting

The Detective Show

Gorman Park Queens NYC

John Fekner

May 7–June 30, 1978

The Detective Show was quite unlike current (or at least, pre-pandemic) street art festivals, with their spectacular large murals, bright colours, and street fair atmosphere. The show was quiet and removed; distanced from the usual New York art world locations and audiences. Extremely low key; it was a temporary art installation about subtlety, nuance, and the magic of discovery by happenstance.

Created for an unsuspecting Queens neighbourhood community, it was unexpected and not intended to overwhelm the viewer. It was beyond the visible; a kind of hide and seek art game; participatory projects that made you engage with the work which ultimately would inform, question and challenge the concept of art, with viewers of all ages, within a New York City playground.

DETECTIVE SHOW

Gorman park - queens

organized
by
john fekner

may 7 - june 30
1978

ARTSCHWAGER · 1	HAZLITT · 17
BANG · 2	HUTTER · 18
BELLINGER · 3	HYNES · 19
BERKLEY · 4	LEICHT · 20
BERTOLDI · 5	MALTZ · 21
CONRAD · 6	MASTRACCHIO · 22
D'ARRIGO · 7	MATTA-CLARK · 23
DE MONTE · 8	MONTANEZ · 24
DOWNSBOROUGH · 9	OLT · 25
DUGDALE · 10	POZZI · 26
FEKNER · 11	RAKITA · 27
FLOETER · 12	SHAW · 28
FORGIONE · 13	STAMM · 29
GREENBAUM · 14	SUNSERI · 30
GROSS · 15	VAN BUREN · 31
HANDZEL · 16	



105

DIANE

LINDA

WV



XXX



















MEMORY





JUBILEE DAYS
FALL...
APR...
WITH AUTUMN...
FALL...
MILWAUKEE, WI

Mozz

Coca-Cola





All photographs courtesy of ©John Fekner and ©Len Bellinger archives. Queens, New York.

'Memory' was not part of the 'Detective Show', 1981.
Photograph: ©Martha Cooper

In order of appearance:
Richard Artschwager (black blps on parkhouse)
Carolyn Conrad (handball court installation in progress)
Elisa D'Arrigo (fence installation in progress)
Dave Santaniello assisting Gary Hutter aka John Fekner (YOUth)
Len Bellinger (painted water fountain), Don Leicht (park bathroom)
Lucio Pozzi (painted trash in bocce court)

John Fekner is a multimedia artist best known for his series of environmentally conceptual works consisting of words, symbols, and dates painted throughout the five boroughs of New York in the '70s. The 'Warning Signs' pointed out hazards and dangerous conditions that overtook a financially bankrupt city in disrepair. Using hand-cut cardboard stencils and spray paint, he began in the industrial streets of Queens and on the East River bridges, and continuing to the South Bronx in 1980 where his 'messages' brought awareness to areas that were in desperate need of attention, whether through demolition or repairs. His 'labeling' of these structures brought emphasis to the problems, where the objective was a shout to the authorities, agencies and local communities to, above all, take action.