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Picture This: Barbara Kruger's Imperfect Utopia

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by
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ABSTRACT

PICTURE THIS: BARBARA KRUGER'S IMPERFECT UTOPIA

By Allie Marie Craver

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013

Major Director: Dr. Robert Hobbs, *Rhonda Thalheimer Chair*, Department of Art History

California contemporary artist Barbara Kruger created the colossal, three-dimensional work *Picture This* as part of the winning outdoor park design *Imperfect Utopia* (1986-1997) held by the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. Situated in the landscape outside the museum's original building designed by Edward Durell Stone, 80-foot-tall letters inscribe Kruger's phrase *Picture This*. The letters are embedded with quotations, historical markers, cultural figures, as well as elements pertaining to North Carolina's history and environment. This thesis proposes that *Picture This* functions as Kruger's conceptual critique of museums; more specifically, it critiques their traditional utopian goals and simulacral stature. This thesis will demonstrate that Kruger's phrase *Picture This* functions as a dialogue with the museum and the state. By drawing parallels between Kruger's work and French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation, this study will elucidate alternative readings of *Picture This* as well as foreground its impact on Kruger's oeuvre.

INTRODUCTION

Since her first appearance in the United States art world in the early 1980s, California contemporary artist Barbara Kruger's work has been celebrated for its juxtaposition of word and image. Her use of concise, declarative statements superimposed onto appropriated photographs attest to her early career as a graphic designer for *Mademoiselle*, *House and Garden*, and *Aperture* magazines.¹ Likewise, Kruger's training in traditional magazine formatting is evident in her work's composition and its phrasing that addresses viewers with such pronouns as *I*, *you*, *we*, and *they*. Although her works utilize common commercial media tactics, scholars and critics have noted that Kruger's art reveals the disjunctions of society according to gender as well as social, political, and financial positions.² Despite its unabashed challenge of mainly art galleries and museums, Kruger's art remains a dominant and debated oeuvre in the art world. Notorious for its utilization of familiar visual aesthetics derived from the world of advertising, her art

¹ After studying photography at Parson's School of Design in New York with Diane Arbus, among others, Kruger served as a head designer at *Mademoiselle* magazine before working as a graphic designer, picture editor, and art director for other publications such as *House and Garden* and *Arpeture*.

² Scholars and critics such as Alexander Alberro, Rosalyn Deutsche, and Kate Linker [a critic], to name a few, have noted the ability of Kruger's works to dispel narratives constructed by commercial media and advertising.

cannot be restricted to feminist or conceptual labels since her works put viewers in positions of control and thus leaves her art open to interpretation. In her work Kruger continues to explore materials, media, and locations: from floor-to-ceiling gallery installations, street signs, billboards and buses, to T-shirts, coffee mugs, and venues such as galleries, museums, subways, freeways, bus shelters, covers of magazines, all of which evidence a continued examination of society, the art world, and, specifically, those in power.

Although most publications on Kruger list the above arsenal of works, and appearances in music videos, no thorough examination of her largest undertaking to date, *Picture This*, and its importance to her overall approach has been undertaken. *Picture This* is part of Kruger's collaborative effort on the winning outdoor project *Imperfect Utopia: A Park for the New World* (1986-1996) for the North Carolina Museum of Art (hereafter NCMA) in Raleigh. Seeking to re-envision its new location as an expansion of art into the landscape, NCMA selected the *Imperfect Utopia* design created by architects Henry Smith-Miller and Laurie Hawkinson, landscape designer Nicholas Quennell, structural engineer Guy Nordenson, and Barbara Kruger. *Imperfect Utopia* seamlessly combines an amphitheater, capable of seating 1,200 people, with an interactive sculpture park. Kruger's contribution to the project, *Picture This*, utilizes her iconic phrasing as inscribed in the landscape by 80-foot, three-dimensional letters. Placed outside the museum's original building designed by Edward Durell Stone, *Picture This*'s letters are embedded with quotations, historical markers, and cultural figures, as well as elements pertaining to North Carolina's history and environment. After outlining NCMA's history and setting, this thesis will consider Kruger's site-specific work, *Picture This*, as a dialogue with the museum and the state of North Carolina. This study proposes that Kruger's *Picture This*

functions as part of her overall conceptual critique of art museums, more specifically, her view of their traditional utopian goals and simulacral stature.

A major focus of this study involves the connection between Kruger and French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. According to Baudrillard, society can no longer distinguish between nature and artifice because of the “precession of simulacra” where images and representations precede and determine the “real.”³ As a representation that precedes and engenders a “real” territory, the map serves as Baudrillard’s example of simulacra and is particularly relevant to the letter “I” in Kruger’s phrase *Picture This*. Her letter contains an outline of North Carolina with embedded concrete historical markers for specific areas within the state that corresponds to Baudrillard’s map as precipitating the territory. Accordingly, he clarifies that society has lost its sense of the world that preceded the map and, thus, reality itself imitates the model. Functioning as one component of a sign system, this letter relates to the deconstruction of the “real” since it correlates with Baudrillard’s third level of simulacra so that only the image remains. The image of the state’s outline implanted on Kruger’s letter “I” and the letter’s usage in English as a singular, first personal pronoun associated to who is speaking, affirms Baudrillard’s theory that representations, maps, and language have been overtaken by simulacra. The argument of this thesis that Baudrillard’s theory of simulation is particularly relevant to an understanding of *Picture This* is based on the fact that he contributed a catalogue essay for Kruger’s 1987 show at the NY Mary Boone Gallery, one year after *Imperfect Utopia*’s selection and the beginning designs of Kruger’s *Picture This*. Although the only references to the

³ For a more thorough description and analysis of Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, see Chapter 2.

NCMA are in catalog entries by Baudrillard and Kruger, Kruger's exhibition falls within the timeframe of the construction of *Imperfect Utopia*. One of the contributions of this thesis will be to show that both Kruger's and Baudrillard's catalogue entries appear to be focused on her outdoor work in Raleigh rather than her show in the New York gallery. Baudrillard's theory of simulation will serve as a means to evaluate both his and Kruger's catalogue essays as well as to interpret the title of Kruger's work, its individual components, and its location, which will serve moreover as a way to justify an interpretation of *Picture This* as her critique of museums in general.

This thesis intends to contribute a greater understanding of *Picture This* by analyzing Kruger's conceptual critique of the museum as a failed utopia. By first chronicling the development of NCMA's site on Blue Ridge Road, while noting challenges that arose during its construction such as exhausted finances, remote location, and the subsequent death of its acclaimed architect Edward Durell Stone during construction, this thesis will link the museum's history to the impossibility of constructing an ideal and elevated world. However, by accepting the project proposal *Imperfect Utopia*, NCMA intended to revolutionize the constructs of art and landscape as well as to question the finality of master plans and site development. The first chapter will provide background on the selection, relocation, and construction of NCMA's Blue Ridge Road location. This site not only functions as the physical setting for *Imperfect Utopia*, but, as this thesis will argue, provides the theoretical and historical framework for the designers as well as Kruger's imperative *Picture This*. Included in this chapter is a critical analysis of *Imperfect Utopia*'s guidelines called *The Theory* and *The Program* as well as their implementation. Both guidelines serve as the theoretical basis of the project since the design

team and NCMA sought an open-ended, revisable master plan that would parallel the flexibility and ephemerality of traditional museum walls. Likewise, the title *Imperfect Utopia* will be analyzed in relation to its location—as implemented in nature outside the museum—as well as the project’s lack of resolution, making it also imperfect.

The second chapter of this thesis will examine possible readings and interpretations of Kruger’s *Picture This*. Beginning with an iconographical analysis of the work, this section will relate *Picture This* to *Imperfect Utopia*, and investigate their joint dialogue with the museum. The project’s use of regional and vernacular materials, specifically those found in the letters that form *Picture This*, highlight the site specificity of Kruger’s work outside the NCMA, which in turn will be likened to her theory concerning museums. Coupled with Kruger’s commentary that critiques the art museum as the staging grounds of power, her *Picture This* parodies this institution’s metanarrative of seeking to order and explain works as “art” in terms of its placement beside Stone’s building and its imperative: to picture her installation as art. However, this thesis does not seek to vilify NCMA; but, rather, to celebrate the museum’s selection and adoption of a project that compels visitors to explore Kruger’s letters as well as the site’s greater land area. In an article “Written on the Landscape,” which was published in *Blueprint* magazine, Andrea Codrington discusses *Imperfect Utopia* as a critique of the urban model of “plaza plop” sculpture, which is a derogatory term for public sculpture created and “plopped” onto government and municipal venues without considering the work’s surrounding area. Codrington views *Imperfect Utopia* as antithetical to the “parsley on the plate” approach to art in the landscape; specifically, the notion that outdoor works serve as a garnish to the museum’s prized

permanent collection.⁴ Seeking to enrich the landscape with site-specific works, NCMA questioned the dominant discourse on public art and architecture as held by other institutions. Selected unanimously by the museum's panel of experts, *Imperfect Utopia* has become a means to engage the public, create a dialogue, and initiate a "laboratory for art and landscape."⁵ These ideas and references will be substantiated by analyzing Kruger's critical perspective on the power of the institution, which will clarify possible motives for the positioning of the work's title phrase, notably its privileged vantage point. As part of an alternative reading of *Picture This*, further analysis of Kruger's artistic background and her relationship with Baudrillard and his theories will be undertaken.

While some publications have linked the project of *Imperfect Utopia* to Baudrillard, no scholar or critic has yet articulated the relationship of simulation to *Picture This*. Since Baudrillard's relevance to NCMA serves as a major component of this thesis, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, it will help at the outset to summarize briefly the scholarship connecting Baudrillard's theories to *Imperfect Utopia*. In her article "Park for a New World" for the periodical *Casabella*, Michele Reboli compares *Imperfect Utopia* to Baudrillard's *sidereal America*, as noted in his book *Amerique* (1986), which expresses his later eccentric theories concerning American culture. Baudrillard uses the term *sidereal America* in accordance with the notion of *sidereal time*, the scale derived from the Earth's rotation as measured relative to a fixed alignment of stars. In a similar alignment to the stars, Americans have constructed a geographical

⁴ Both notions of outdoor public art—"plaza plop sculpture" and "parsley on the plate" approach to art in the landscape—are described as the negation of site-specific art, see Andrea Codrington, "Written on the Landscape," *Blueprint* 140 (June 1997): 38-9.

⁵ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 3.

layout as seen in New York City's skyscrapers and Los Angeles' freeways, which Baudrillard defines as a *sidereal* America. However, in contrast to the relatively fixed position of stars, *sidereal* America functions via the circulation of people through this country's buildings, freeways, and established time zones that precede and establish the "real" America. Reboli argues that *Imperfect Utopia* functions as part of Baudrillard's *sidereal* America because of its extensive system of circulation for visitors that established lines, vectors, and zones throughout the landscape and interconnected with the museum.⁶ This system of circulation is mirrored in NCMA's location within the Research Triangle, a region in the Piedmont of North Carolina characterized by its universities, research facilities, and numerous high-tech companies as well as its accessibility to the omnipresent motorway network between Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. The irony within the *Imperfect Utopia* design and Kruger's phrase will be likened to the apparent contradictions in constructing a museum as utopia. Likewise, *Imperfect Utopia* and *Picture This* will be evaluated in accordance with Baudrillard's theories.

Scholars have applied some terminology identifiable with Baudrillard's simulation in publications concerning *Imperfect Utopia*. Although scholar Mark Wigley fails to refer directly to the French theorist, his article on *Imperfect Utopia* for *Assemblage* magazine incorporates numerous concepts articulated by Baudrillard. In his description of the museum's site as a "post-urban artificial landscape" that has come to "represent present-day reality, which many architects have chosen to ignore," Wigley appears to be using Baudrillard's notion of the *hyperreal*, that is

⁶ Further, Reboli interprets the site as a dialogue between the "high" and "low" elements of local culture in an attempt to "realign the apparent contradictions of the suburb and the city." A greater discussion of Baudrillard and *Imperfect Utopia* can be found in Michele Reboli, "Park for a New World," *Casabella*. 62, no. 654 (March 1998): 34-41.

the inability to distinguish the real from a simulation of the real.⁷ Later in the same article, landscape designer Nicholas Quennell discusses the seductive nature of architectural competitions, which produce “not ...the building that it actually might *be*, but the sign of a building that it is on the model,” which again relates to Baudrillard’s idea of the simulacral.⁸ Using the theory of simulation, the second chapter will elucidate the possible connections between Baudrillard, Kruger, and NCMA, notably *Picture This* and *Imperfect Utopia*.

The final chapter will highlight the current conditions and future of the museum’s landscape, including the space *Imperfect Utopia* designates. By noting the design team’s past and present reflections, *Imperfect Utopia*’s theoretical concerns will be substantiated. Similarly, the last section will situate Kruger’s *Picture This* among other contemporaneous institutional critiques of museum spaces. By relating Kruger’s work to Andrea Fraser, who first used the term “institutional critique” for museums in 1985, even though it had been widely published in other disciplines, this study will attest to the historical significance of *Picture This*. This thesis will offer a fresh perspective of *Picture This* and *Imperfect Utopia* through its focus on Kruger’s conceptual critique of museums. Although Kruger criticizes the institution in general, this thesis will defend and assert the importance of NCMA as the selector, benefactor, and, most importantly, interdependent site of her work *Picture This* and, in fact, invited critique. The NCMA resolved to continue its expansion of art into the landscape as evidenced by its recent additions that will be contextualized as an extension of its earlier 1986 *Art + Landscape*

⁷ Laurie Hawkinson et al., “Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory,” *Assemblage*, no. 10 (December 1989): 24.

⁸ Laurie Hawkinson et al., “Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory,” *Assemblage*, no. 10 (December 1989): 41.

competition. Having noted the scholarly precedents, recent developments, and the construction of a new museum building on the site, this analysis will develop further critic Chuck Twardy's earlier prescient sentiment from his article "Suburban Museum Seeks Curb Appeal" for *Metropolis* magazine: "utopia remains elusive."⁹ In this thesis, utopia is defined as a relatively fixed, picture-perfect world; however, any utopia's elusiveness—its inability ever to achieve or come close to its conception—always constitutes some form of imperfection.

⁹ Chuck Twardy, "Suburban Museum Seeks Curb Appeal" *Metropolis* (July/August 1997): 41.

CHAPTER ONE: GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

The North Carolina Museum of Art was initially founded in 1924 as the North Carolina Fine Arts Society (hereafter Art Society), which sought to establish an art collection and museum in the state capitol of Raleigh. Three years after the Art Society formed, legislation was passed that labeled the group as a major cultural division of North Carolina and provided space for its current and future acquisitions.

In 1928, North Carolina native and businessman Robert F. Phifer endowed funds and seventy-five paintings to the burgeoning society. This substantial gift led the following year to an inaugural series of temporary art exhibitions held in the reconfigured State Agricultural Building in downtown Raleigh. Given the need for additional space for its collection, the former Supreme Court Building would later become the new Art Society Gallery. With the advent of the Great Depression and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt Administration's subsequent Works Progress Administration (WPA), Raleigh was viewed as a prospective headquarters for the Federal Art Project (FAP). The national director of the FAP Holger Cahill noted the city's promise as an art capital, stating: "Raleigh becomes the first city in the nation to have a federally supported art center."¹⁰ With the help of the WPA, 67 art centers were established in the United

¹⁰ Cahill adds "the program tends to make art the property of all rather than the hobby of a few," from Peggy Jo D. Kirby, *The North Carolina Museum of Art: The First Fifty Years 1947-1997: A Selected Chronology*, (Raleigh: The North Carolina Museum of Art, 1997), 19 (repr., Lawrence Lippard, "Architecture for Art, Art for the People," North Carolina Museum of Art, NC State

States; notably, six of them were located in North Carolina, including one in Raleigh.¹¹ Support from the federal and state government helped Raleigh to develop as a regional arts center; likewise, the state bureaucracy would become an integral benefactor for funding its museum and enlarging its collection. Due to the dismantling of the Federal Arts Project in 1943, federal funding for the arts also ceased; thus, the state of North Carolina found itself needing to find other means to support the Art Society.

By passing Senate Bill 395 in 1947, North Carolina found a solution for its Art Society, which made history. The bill appropriated one-million dollars of state funds for the development of an art museum. Despite the legislation's unparalleled allocation of money in support of the arts, national headlines were focused on the bill as the state's response to an unknown donor (at the time), who vowed to match its allocated funds. This donor was the prominent New York philanthropist Samuel H. Kress, and his gift to the state was one of the largest and most significant donations in the nation. With the help of Robert Lee Humber, a lawyer specializing in international affairs and a North Carolina native, negotiations were finalized in 1951. Ultimately, the Kress Foundation donated 70 works of art, primarily Italian Renaissance paintings, with a value totaling one-million dollars to the Art Society. Likewise, the state's one-million dollar bequest helped purchase 139 European and American paintings and sculptures. Given the

University, entry posted November 16, 2012, <http://lwlippar.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2012/11/16/architecture-for-art-art-for-the-people/> accessed September 7, 2013).

¹¹ The Raleigh center opened on May 1, 1936; as part of the program, each center received four years of federal funding.

collection's increase in size and esteem, the Art Society formally adopted the name: "The North Carolina Museum of Art."

NCMA's Historical Background

Along with the name change, NCMA relocated to the old State Highway building on Morgan Street in downtown Raleigh. The unprecedented donations not only became the basis of NCMA's collection but would become representative of the museum itself. As one of the first museums in the country to be established using state funds, NCMA opened on April 6th, 1956 and was nicknamed the "Miracle on Morgan Street."¹² Because of NCMA's national publicity, a director of similar prominence was selected to lead the institution. The first NCMA director Dr. William Valentiner had previously served as the director of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the Detroit Institute of Arts; before that he was co-director of the Los Angeles County Museum. Although NCMA became one of the preeminent art institutions south of Washington, D.C. given its unrivaled Kress Collection, this gift was not formalized until 1959. On November 30, 1960, the Kress Collection formally opened at Morgan Street. That following year, state legislature legally separated NCMA from the Art Society, which made the museum a state agency jointly governed by the state government and a board of trustees. As the years progressed and the collection expanded, a new museum became necessary since the Morgan Street building lacked the proper temperature gauges and humidity settings for its tightly-hung works of art.

¹² This nickname, "The Miracle on Morgan Street," appears in the local papers from the period, as noted by NCMA, from Carol Ann Douglas, "Transformation of the North Carolina Museum of Art," (Master's thesis, North Carolina State University, 2009), 2, (repr., Lawrence Lippard, "Architecture for Art, Art for the People," North Carolina Museum of Art, NC State University, entry posted November 16, 2012, <http://lwlippar.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2012/11/16/architecture-for-art-art-for-the-people/> accessed September 7, 2013).

In 1967 the request for a new facility was approved when the North Carolina General Assembly enacted into law a State Art Building Commission. Composed of fifteen people, the Commission would select a site and supervise the construction of a new museum. Deciding on a farm along Blue Ridge Road in western Raleigh, with a proposed expansion of 164 acres, the property's history is traceable to its early settlement by Native Americans and later occupation during the Civil War as a training facility. At the time of its selection, Blue Ridge Road housed the Polk Youth Prison in the adjacent lot, totaling 24 acres. Due to the land's former and current occupants, NCMA's relocation sparked a contentious debate amongst residents. Numerous lawsuits and bills were filed against the Commission since Blue Ridge Road lies outside the downtown Capitol district, far from other state museums and areas of attraction.

Despite the protests, the General Assembly approved the Blue Ridge Road location and construction on NCMA's new facility began in 1977 under the direction of Edward Durell Stone and his associate team based in New York. Stone had previously designed the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1937 with Philip S. Goodwin, the Ponce Museum of Art in Puerto Rico (1961), the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. (1962), and the North Carolina State Legislative Building in Raleigh (1962). In his early 1971 sketches for NCMA, Stone utilized a square as the basic unit for the new facility; the building in its entirety was to represent a pure geometric form: both the structure and its internal galleries adhered to square dimensions.¹³ Stone also experimented spatially with the surrounding site by designing it as an elaboration on the square form. The landscape was thus envisioned in terms of the pure

¹³ The same year Stone's sketches were finalized for NCMA (1971), he also completed his design for the Mary Duke Biddle Music Building on the campus of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Similar to NCMA project, the associate architects Holloway & Reeves finished his construction.

geometry of the square. Despite the formality of his vision, Stone's untimely death in 1978 (the year after breaking ground) coupled with construction delays and inflation, affected the final design of NCMA both metaphorically and physically. According to Dan Gottlieb, NCMA's current Director of Planning and Design, Stone's "original 400,000 square foot design was whittled down to 180,000 square feet and completed by a local architecture firm."¹⁴ His original plan of white marble with an open glass façade was not adhered to in the final structure with its blonde brick, coffered ceiling, and simple window structure resembling an office building. Stone envisioned a museum with mainly windows to house a sculpture collection—a strange choice since NCMA's collection is comprised mostly of painting—and would have necessitated additional state appropriations to make the building a proper backdrop for the museum's collection.

Regardless of these aesthetic and financial setbacks, NCMA opened to the public on April 5, 1983, exactly twenty-seven years after its initial opening. Although the building was a mere shadow of Stone's design, the square footage for the exhibition, office, and storage space had quadrupled from its earlier location on Morgan Street. Similarly, the new building afforded the collection ample room for expansion, since it had double the exhibition space of the downtown facility. As the only structure on the expansive farm property featuring rolling topography, woods, and a pond, the museum appeared to "float" in the landscape of red clay and pastureland, since it stood alone and isolated, unmoored to any other structure.¹⁵ Thus, NCMA

¹⁴ Dan Gottlieb, interview by author, Raleigh, NC, July 9, 2012.

board and staff felt the need to create a competition in order to anchor Stone's structure to its environment and to minimize the intrusion of the wire fencing of its neighboring penal institution.

Imperfect Utopia Project

Seeking to expand the museum outside the confines of its isolated structure, NCMA developed the *Art + Landscape* national competition in 1986 with the assistance of a National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) grant. In awarding this grant, NEA advised NCMA to consider the winning design as part of a larger expansion scheme for the museum's grounds.¹⁶ In order to break the bounded conditions of art and landscape as well as those of public and institution, Patricia Fuller, the museum's public art consultant, stated that the competition panel had to find "a team that in themselves provoked challenging questions of their disciplines simultaneously from within and without."¹⁷ Representing the diverse fields of "contemporary public art, museum education, landscape architecture, and inter-disciplinary design collaboration," a distinguished panel was formed in order to select the finalists from over ninety entries.¹⁸ With the influx of

¹⁵ This term "float" was used by NCMA in a 1987 document that detailed a brief history of the museum and described its current problems. This text was given to applicants of the *Art + Landscape* competition.

¹⁶ The park plan would not be extended fully to the 164-acres until 2000 when the North Carolina General Assembly granted NCMA use of the Polk Prison grounds.

¹⁷ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 1.

¹⁸ NCMA's 1987 documentation listed the panelists as: Director of the Stuart Collection at the University of San Diego Mary Livingstone Beebe, Chairman of the Division of Landscape

proposals from celebrated artists, architects, and designers, the four finalists received notification in December 1987 before a winner was chosen.

Developing their own set of parameters for the *Art + Landscape* competition, NCMA detailed several expectations concerning the final team's selection:

Initially the team will participate in the refinement of a program for the site, exploring with the Museum a range of potential uses and activities. The team will begin the planning research into the Museum, its context and physical site, followed by a period of conceptual development, then the refinement of the concept and presentation of the completed plan. There will be a series of on-site meetings in the course of the process. The process will involve dialogue with a client team of key staff and board members in addition to public presentations at the outset and at completion to introduce the plan.¹⁹

From the outset, NCMA sought a design plan and a team, who would enter into a dialogue with the museum, its site, its staff, and its board. As part of NCMA's effort to encompass a wide variety of educational and recreational activities in the landscape, the design's conceptual

Architecture at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville Warren Turnbull Byrd, former Director of the Committee on the Visual Arts at M.I.T. Kathy Halbreich, Assistant Professor in the School of Environmental Design at the University of Georgia Catherine M. Howett, and Director of the Education Department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York Philip Yenawine.

¹⁹ From the guidelines of the *Art + Landscape* competition, page 2. As part of the public presentations to be held at the project's completion, NCMA Curator of American and Contemporary Art John Coffey delivered a formal introduction to Patricia Fuller's presentation of NCMA's *Art + Landscape* competition at the "Public Art Dialogue = Southeast" conference, sponsored by the North Carolina Arts Council, in Durham on June 10, 1989.

development was envisioned and celebrated as a means to revolutionize the educational and public programs held at the museum.

The winning design: *Imperfect Utopia: A Park for the New World*, is situated at the southwest of Stone's original building, beginning twenty feet below its main entrance and extending to the outer limits of the site. One of the *Imperfect Utopia*'s architects, Smith-Miller has recollected, "at the time of the museum's completion, the landscape had been left scarified and barren, and the collection inside the rather hermetic Edward Stone building was quite Eurocentric."²⁰ Although the architect notes the dissimilarities between the inside and outside of the structure, both NCMA and the design team sought to represent and revitalize the original and historical features of the land. *Imperfect Utopia*'s master plan attempted to resolve the disparities between the museum and the landscape by supporting the site's natural features, thereby creating zones for future use and development.

The title of the project: *Imperfect Utopia: A Park for the New World* can be interpreted in multiple ways: one, as a reference to the complications associated with the museum's relocation and construction; two, as a description of NCMA as it stood in the 1980s. Stone's grandiose, utopian vision for NCMA and surrounding landscape had been unfulfilled. The architect's death shortly after construction along with the unforeseen recession caused a drastic reduction in the scale and details of the building, which resulted in a more utilitarian, cost-efficient design. A third possibility is that *Imperfect Utopia*'s title relates to the project's distinct methodological plan: a continued quest for "utopia," which is never a finalized outcome. Similarly, the tagline *A Park for the New World* correlates with NCMA's intention to repurpose the landscape for a

²⁰ Smith-Miller, e-mail interview with author, March 21, 2012.

variety of uses. Quennell noted that the original building was “conventional, not particularly beautiful, the project [*Imperfect Utopia*] was intentionally an effort to counteract the conservatives, which made the project a lot more interesting.”²¹ Quennell’s statement highlights *Imperfect Utopia*’s intent to juxtapose Stone’s altered, conventional structure with an innovative design for the landscape. Reinforcing the museum’s intention to “stimulate speculative and exploratory thinking,” *Imperfect Utopia*’s theoretical concerns answered the requests stipulated by NCMA.²²

In order to justify their approach to space, the *Imperfect Utopia* team detailed their objectives in two documents, *The Theory* and *The Program*. Rather than advocating a fixed outcome, as did the traditional and limited master plan, the team proposed a strategy for flexible zoning. Featured in the design proposal, *The Theory* and *The Program* read as follows:

The Theory:

To disperse the univocality of a “Master Plan” into an aerosol of imaginary conversations and inclusionary tactics. To bring in rather than leave out. To make signs. To re-naturalize. To question the priorities of style and taste. To anticipate change and invite alteration. To construct a cycle of repair and discovery. To question the limitations of vocation. To be brought down to earth. To make the permanent temporary. To see the forest for the trees. To have no end in sight.

²¹ Quennell, telephone interview with author, March 21, 2012.

²² From the guidelines of the *Art + Landscape* competition, page 2.

The Program:

To restructure the approach to the museum. To allow for laboratory settings for artists and designers. To provide a visible inexpensive, short-term botanical strategy to alter the place. To introduce movie-going, walking, wading, eating, reading, bird watching, relaxing and other familiar pleasures. To punctuate the site with regional, cultural and vernacular signage. To replace the forest that's been lost.

Imperfect Utopia's design sought to "invite chance, temporariness, and the input of others" for the museum's outdoor area.²³ Its landscape was to be re-naturalized, incorporating new plantings such as wildflowers and crops of corn, cotton, and tobacco, which reflect Raleigh's natural and cultural history. This re-naturalization would also constitute the reforestation of native tree species as well as the restoration of indigenous plant life as key elements within the landscape design. The creators collaborated with not only local botanists, soil experts, and engineers in the Research Triangle area, but also sought to involve the museum's "staff in a continuing dialogue... [in which] the planners also brought the Museum itself into the arena of collaboration."²⁴ During the design process, the contributors visited the Biltmore Estate in Asheville; the Sarah P. Duke Gardens in Durham; and the Brookgreen Gardens in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina in order to familiarize themselves with local landscapes and architectural works. Because of their visits, their design was to include grove parking areas, artists' cabins, a

²³ Shauna Gilles Smith, "Practicing Imperfect Utopia: Two Projects by the Collaboration of Laurie Hawkinson, Barbara Kruger, Nicholas Quennell, Henry Smith-Miller, and Guy Nordenson," (MIT: The Discourse of Public Space, 1995), 11.

²⁴ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 7.

greenhouse with classrooms, recreational facilities, vegetation and plantings, and an outdoor sculpture court.

In an effort to punctuate the site with regional, cultural, and vernacular features, a map of North Carolina depicting major historic sites was to be displayed in the first “I” of *Picture This*. Kruger’s permanent sculptural installation *Picture This* was to feature also an assortment of historic events, cultural figures, and quotations related to North Carolina. Referencing the state with its utilization of a type of steel that commonly adopts local tobacco barns, the amphitheater interconnects with the letters “T” and “H” of Kruger’s phrase.

Reflecting the approach of the *Imperfect Utopia* team, the museum’s publication clarified the fundamental intermixing of art with the site’s landscape in the following way:

The expanse of open and wooded land surrounding the North Carolina Museum of Art is a resource enjoyed by few museums in the world and provides a *rare* opportunity to make art available to the public in a landscape environment.²⁵

Imperfect Utopia as a dialogue between the museum and its contributors was to contrast the openness, informality, and inclusivity of art in the landscape with the structured, and exclusive setting for art in the more traditional museum. An important distinction of *Imperfect Utopia* is its insistence on lacking a finalized master plan, a position which would allow the site to respond to contemporary and traditional modes of art, architecture, and landscape overtime and in the future. Connected with this approach, the site plan for *Imperfect Utopia* embodied the notion of chance: the zones were loosely constructed to support the unpredictability of nature and to enable future development, a variety of authors, and thus reflect human adaptability. The transitional

²⁵ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 4.

and cyclical are also accounted for in this work: time changes, seasons change, and the so-called permanent outdoor artworks in fact are subject to change; thus, *Imperfect Utopia* is never finalized in its design. Similarly, NCMA viewed *Imperfect Utopia* not as a constructed layout but as a flexible design open to future amendments by artists, designers, architects, and landscapers. This flexibility is also echoed in the design collective's questioning of the "limitations of vocation," as stated in *The Theory*; the designers were not intended to be constricted to their respective fields but were able to work cross-disciplinary as a design team.

Concurrently, *Imperfect Utopia* was intended to disregard the restrictions and boundary lines separating different disciplines—art, architecture, landscape—in an effort to become multidisciplinary and applicable to both the fine arts and mass culture. Ironically, culture would be embraced in the landscape in an area designated "Active Culture." This interactive area was to be constructed as an alternative and would parody greatly the traditional type of museum sculpture garden, where culture is seemingly oppressed or rigidly presented, and art typically functions as an extension of the museum's aesthetic ideology where it is intended—even in the landscape—to be viewed from a distance, not touched or interfaced in proximity. As stated in the initial call for entries for the *Art + Landscape* competition, NCMA noted:

The project challenges artists and design professionals to venture beyond the familiar repertory of approaches to art in the landscape to find a coherent vision which integrates the Museum building, works of art, activities, and landscape.²⁶

Picture This, part of the "Active Culture" area, contests the ideological structure of traditional museums and the practices of its patrons, thereby supporting the "challenge" to the usual

²⁶ From the guidelines of the *Art + Landscape* competition, page 2.

methods as noted in NCMA's guidelines. By utilizing the term "active," the project hints at the passive, static nature of patrons, promoted by museums, as the foil to the dynamic, cyclical movement of nature.

According to an early proposal of *Imperfect Utopia*, the site plan involves "the investigation and critique of Twentieth Century Art and Landscape Condition [sic.] and its relationship to Raleigh, North Carolina."²⁷ Adding further in the document, "the museum is not located in a neutral field," therefore, the site's history, geographic location, and position within the local and global culture provide its meaning. Considering this meaning is constructed, the designers note the inseparable link between the viewer and the site since neither is neutral or, more simply, natural. By utilizing the existing museum as a backdrop, *Imperfect Utopia* advanced its theory in terms of this reference and the space surrounding it, thereby integrating Stone's building, works of art, activities, and landscape.

According to Dan Gottlieb, *Imperfect Utopia* was "widely published, and in design circles it was quite well known...It was the first push into the public realm for site-specific works and the counter revolution against "plop-down art."²⁸ As part of the

²⁷ From an early statement of intent as featured in *Imperfect Utopia*'s design proposal (author dated before 1987).

²⁸ Quotation from Dan Gottlieb featured in from Carol Ann Douglas, "Transformation of the North Carolina Museum of Art," (Master's thesis, North Carolina State University, 2009), 12 (repr., Lawrence Lippard, "Architecture for Art, Art for the People," North Carolina Museum of Art, NC State University, entry posted November 16, 2012, <http://lwlippard.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2012/11/16/architecture-for-art-art-for-the-people/> accessed September 7, 2013).

1989 collection of writings titled “From the Other Side: Public Artists on Public Art” for *Art Journal*, New York City artist Joyce Kozloff notes:

So, “plop” art gave way to site-specific art, which is now being challenged by “interference” art (art that questions and disrupts, rather than complements, its surroundings).²⁹

Imperfect Utopia’s plan sought to negate the then-current trend of “plop” art in favor of a design that melds the location’s history with a reflection on the museum. Mentioned in the same article as Gottlieb’s quote, *Picture This* was also commissioned to respond in the revolution against “plop-down art” since the work likewise melds the location’s history with a reflection on the museum.³⁰ This thesis will propose two possible readings of Kruger’s *Picture This*: as site-specific art for NCMA, or as “interference art” given its consistencies with Baudrillard’s theory of simulation and Kruger’s critical views of museums. An analysis of Kruger’s work will be covered in the next chapter.

²⁹ Kozloff adds further “Progressives in the public art field advocate design teams of artists, engineers, architects, and landscape architects. It will be a while before we can evaluate projects produced in that way.” Andrea Blum et al., “From the Other Side: Public Artists on Public Art,” *Art Journal* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 339.

³⁰ Quotation from Dan Gottlieb featured in Carol Ann Douglas, “Transformation of the North Carolina Museum of Art,” (Master’s thesis, North Carolina State University, 2009), 2 (repr., Lawrence Lippard, “Architecture for Art, Art for the People,” North Carolina Museum of Art, NC State University, entry posted November 16, 2012, <http://lwlippar.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2012/11/16/architecture-for-art-art-for-the-people/> accessed September 7, 2013).

CHAPTER TWO: READING *PICTURE THIS*

An artist based in California who first achieved prominence in the early 1980s, Barbara Kruger joined her noted combination of conceptually probing statements with physical, antagonistic design elements for the project of *Imperfect Utopia*. Physically, the work incorporates Kruger's trademark, oversized letters. Conceptually, Kruger's phrase *Picture This* was intended to be situated alongside Stone's building, its natural environment, the site's extensive land area. As an element within the *Imperfect Utopia* design, *Picture This* evidences Kruger's contemporaneous theories regarding art, history, landscape, and culture.

The large scale of the phrase *Picture This* as well as its placement in the landscape creates a definite hurdle for viewers in regards to its legibility. Only from an aerial perspective—an airplane—could viewers properly read the statement. The letters forming Kruger's phrase are distinct from one another: the "P" is an excavation cut into the landscape, the "I" a concrete embedded map, the "C" an embedded sand deposit, the "T" a finished asphalt area, the "U" a landscape of grasses and vegetation, the "R" parallel rows of fence, and the "E" connected concrete walls; all together the collective of letters forms the word "PICTURE." Similarly for the word "THIS," the "T" is part of the amphitheater's seating, the "H" a wooden deck conjoined to

the stage, the “I” concrete imprinted with text, and the “S” built with boulders.³¹ The message is a reflection on the piece: its position in the world (beside the institution that metaphorically and physically frames the work) and current conceptions of it as art.

The sprawling text placed in the landscape, visible from the glass elevator in the contemporary art building, demands that viewers—as travelers between art worlds: inside the galleries of NCMA and outside on the landscape—take responsibility for the act of perception these separate yet linked forms demand. However, a variety of readings is possible for the statement; correspondingly, highlighting a specific meaning behind the phrase would utilize the conventions of a closed reading, which is the antithesis of postmodernist theory and a tactic inimical to Kruger’s art. She explains, “We have always been represented rather than tried to represent ourselves.”³² The imperative of *Picture This* urges viewers to image or see the artwork on their own.

Along the length of the letter “P,” the concrete retention wall adjoins the patio entryway of Stone’s building. Kruger embedded in it a series of statements that read:

PLEASED TO MEET YOU • PLEASE READ THE WRITING ON THE WALL
• PLEASE DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO
YOU • PLEASE DON’T TURN ME INSIDE OUT • PLEASE DON’T LET
HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF • PLEASE LOOK FOR THE MOMENT WHEN

³¹ According to documentation from January 1988, an initial design of Kruger’s *Picture This* proposed a letter made of river rock with jets that mist water as well as a letter formed by bricks stamped with text, from NCMA archive.

³² W. J. T. Mitchell and Barbara Kruger, “An Interview with Barbara Kruger,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1991): 436.

PRIDE BECOMES CONTEMPT • PLEASE PLEASE ME • PLEASE LIVE
AND LET LIVE • PLEASE LET EMPATHY CHANGE THE WORLD •
PLEASE DON'T FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE • PLEASE DON'T LITTER.
PLEASE USE ONLY AS DIRECTED • PLEASE READ BETWEEN THE
LINES • PLEASE DON'T HIT ME • PLEASE TRADE FEAR FOR
EMBRACE • PLEASE DON'T HURT ME WITH HATE • PLEASE DON'T
THREATEN ME WITH LOVE • PLEASE BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE •

Using the term “PLEASE” at the start of each phrase, Kruger parodies the typical directions, regulations, and common courtesies requested by museums, parks, and at public settings. In contrast with the imperative of *Picture This*, the “PLEASE” phrases use colloquialisms that add dimensions of humor, sarcasm, and familiarity. In the context of their location, the phrases serve as polite instructions or pleading injunctions to interpreting Kruger’s work: “please read the writing on the wall,” “please don’t let history repeat itself,” and so forth. These appropriated phrases challenge the concept of originality and also are re-appropriated in Kruger’s later work, which is discussed in Chapter 3.³³ Commonly uttered without citing their initial author, these phrases are juxtaposed against the quotations attributed to historical and cultural figures as displayed on the connecting concrete walls that form the letter “E” of the word “PICTURE.”

³³ Kruger remains interested in space and the narratives constituted by it, she uses the word “PLEASE” in her “Past / Present / Future” installation at the Temporary Stedelijk at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam: August 28, 2010 - January 9, 2011 for the phrase: “PLEASE LAUGH.” Likewise, the George Orwell quotation from the letter “E” of *Picture* is also featured as part of her installation.

Also displaying appropriated text, the letter “E” features 79 quotations, including twenty-two questions by Kruger, which are affixed as plaques to the inside and outside of the structure.³⁴ Of the fifty-five quotations taken from historical figures, writers, theorists, two presidents, Civil Rights and women’s suffrage activists, six are from the abolitionist Frederick Douglas.³⁵ However varied, Kruger’s selection of people and their statements does not seem arbitrary.³⁶ A 1984 survey of NCMA attendees, given as background information to the design finalists, noted 98% of the museum’s visitors are white and 40% are in the 25 to 34 age bracket. Likewise, two-thirds of the attendees are from the Research Triangle area, with local Raleigh residents accounting for more than one-third of the visitors. Given these statistics, Kruger interweaved quotations from notable abolitionists and Civil Rights leaders in an effort, perhaps in conjunction with NCMA, to relate to its own public while educating them. Quotations relating to Raleigh’s history from the 1866 Freedman’s Convention in Raleigh, to Reverend James Lawson of the Raleigh-based Civil Rights activist group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the capitol’s namesake: Sir Walter Raleigh are distributed throughout this letter

³⁴ See Appendix A for the list of quotations.

³⁵ An example of a quotation from Frederick Douglas: “Pictures come not with slavery and oppression and destitution, but with liberty, fair play, leisure and refinement,” which corresponds to the title of Kruger’s work: *Picture This*.

³⁶ The long list of names include: Virginia Woolf, Mark Twain, Robert Frost, Victor Hugo, H.G. Wells, Rebecca West, Henry Miller, Dorothy Parker, Wole Soyinka, Mary McCarthy, H.L. Mencken, Karl Kraus, Thomas Mann, Edgar Allen Poe, George Orwell, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Aimé Césaire, Thomas Paine, Thomas Wolfe, Charlotte Brontë, Franz Kafka, Molière, Roland Barthes, Frantz Fanon, Walter Benjamin, John Maynard Keynes, Jean Paul Sartre, George Santayana, Jacob Bronowski, Abraham Lincoln, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Malcolm X, Frederick Douglas, Indira Gandhi, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Jr. , Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Benjamin Disraeli, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

alongside statements from prominent the Native American chief Red Cloud, and the Navajo Manuelito. The selection of phrases concerning tobacco, a prominent crop of North Carolina, from celebrated literary theorists and writers reiterates Kruger's interest in site-specificity. As a collection, the phrases address the construction of history, the violence accorded to some, and the importance of language. One of the quotations featured in the letter by German novelist Thomas Mann states: "Speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact—it is silence which isolates." By preserving its contact to the site, the public, and NCMA, Kruger's *Picture This* can be understood as advocating pictures as tantamount to "civilization itself," since even the "most contradictory" picture is neither silent nor isolated. Fostering her own dialogue with the museum, its patrons, and its concept of history, Kruger interlaced her own (unattributed) questions within the letter:

WHO IS FREE TO CHOOSE? • WHO SEES? • WHO IS SEEN? • WHO IS
BOUGHT AND SOLD? • WHO IS BEYOND THE LAW? • WHO IS
HEALED? • WHO IS HOUSED? • WHO DOES THE CRIME? • WHO DOES
THE TIME? • WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? • WHO DIES FIRST? •
WHO LAUGHS LAST? • WHO WINS? • WHO LOVES? • WHO HATES? •
WHO IS AFRAID OF IDEAS? • WHO SPEAKS? • WHO IS SILENT? •
WHO LOSES? • WHO SALUTES LONGEST? • WHO PRAYS LOUDEST? •
WHO WILL WRITE THE HISTORY OF TEARS? •

Possible answers to this introduced are the selected people whose quotations appear in the letter "E" as well as the plural "we" or "us" responsible for writing master narratives, constructing

history, and valuing “ourselves” more than “others.”³⁷ As compared to the other letterforms, the “E” serves as Kruger’s global reference to the construct of history as seen in her selection of national and international figures. Kruger’s overall work both attacks the space and, according to scholar Rosalind Deutsche, the “voice that assumes it can speak for a universal public, questioning the authority and authoritarianism of the dominant and political relations of space within which it exists.”³⁸ Kruger’s works are reflections of the space in which they exist, usually critical of the space’s (the specific site’s) inherent ideology. *Picture This* embodies Kruger’s characteristic formal and theoretical concerns: her attack on master narratives, her appropriation of cultural, historical, and regional iconography, and her display of dry wit together with ambiguous, bold, typography.

Being placed beside NCMA, *Picture This* can be interpreted as Kruger’s questions regarding the museum, its structure, and its viewers. On another occasion, Kruger has challenged the museum with its images of *great* art, stating:

As we tend to become who we are through a dense crush of allowances and denials, inclusions and absences, we begin to see how approval is accorded through the languages of “greatness,” that heady brew concocted with a slice of

³⁷ Kruger appropriates some of the “WHO” texts: “WHO IS BOUGHT AND SOLD?” “WHO SALUTES LONGEST?” “WHO PRAYS LOUDEST?” “WHO DIES FIRST?” “WHO LAUGHS LAST?” as part of her “Untitled (Questions)” exhibit (1989-90); these texts were featured on the outdoor south wall of the Temporary Contemporary, MOCA, Los Angeles on view from June 29, 1990 – July 1992. The arrangement resembled an American Flag.

³⁸ Shauna Gilles Smith, “Practicing Imperfect Utopia: Two Projects by the Collaboration of Laurie Hawkinson, Barbara Kruger, Nicholas Quennell, Henry Smith-Miller, and Guy Nordenson,” (MIT: The Discourse of Public Space, 1995), 13.

visual pleasure, a pinch of connoisseurship, a mention of myth, and a dollop of money.³⁹

Noting that approval in the art world necessitates a “heady brew” of aesthetics, proper art training, requisite finances, and a fabricated tale, Kruger did not arbitrarily place her work beside the museum. Literally existing outside NCMA’s walls, *Picture This* can be understood as meta-art and as Kruger’s response to the “languages of ‘greatness’” so often extolled by art museums. By using the framework of the institution in order to criticize and parody its practices, Kruger establishes a postmodernist perspective, which relates to the work’s setting. As evidenced in the above quote, Kruger parodies the aspirations of traditional art museums; their typical sculpture gardens, their icons and quotations from history, their highly-cultured sense of history indicated by their reference to Greek or Roman amphitheaters, and their consequent undermining of the natural through the eradication of their connections with their immediate environment, and relative isolation from popular culture in order to obtain autonomy. As stated previously in reference to “plop” art, *Imperfect Utopia* and *Picture This* refer to common interpretations of public art and architecture as being inferior to the autonomy accorded to “masterpieces” in the traditional art museum’s permanent collection. Kruger remarks “if architecture is a slab of meat, then so-called public art is a piece of garnish lying next to it.”⁴⁰ Yet, Kruger’s work is not merely a garnish to NCMA’s architecture; *Picture This*’ meta-critique enables the viewer to reflect on the past, present, and future of art, architecture and art history.

³⁹ Barbara Kruger, *Remote Control: Power, Cultures, and the World of Appearances* (MIT Press, 1993), 222.

⁴⁰ W. J. T. Mitchell and Barbara Kruger, “An Interview with Barbara Kruger,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1991): 434.

In regards to the design team's perception of *Picture This*, Smith-Miller and Hawkinson state the work:

melds the concepts of spectacle, site, and text into a public space that expands the museum's capacity for outdoor programs; engaging ideas of history, culture, geography, and topography, this public space provides an accessible place for a variety of experiences in the landscape.⁴¹

Viewed in terms relative to Situationist artist Guy Debord's concept of the spectacle in his *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), *Picture This* emphasizes how relations between commodities, including art, have replaced relations between people, ideas, history, and culture. Its site, at NCMA enables it to emphasize by comparison how traditional museums have been uprooting people—artists, society, history, culture—from a primary focus on artworks as concepts to reducing them as commodities. However, NCMA's park plan expands the capacities of art and history. Edgar Allen Poe's quotation from the letter "E" appears to refer to the traditional museum's antiquated unfortunately inadvertent perception of art as commodity where viewers become alienated from each other as well as the art itself:

He entered shop after shop, priced nothing, spoke no word, and looked at all the objects with a wild and vacant stare.⁴²

⁴¹ Judith Turner, *Between Spaces: Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 153.

⁴² This quotation from Edgar Allen Poe's "Man of the Crowd," his short story from 1840, is featured in Kruger's letter "E" of *Picture This*.

Utilizing Poe's quotation for her letter, Kruger addresses roaming viewers inside the museum, who in entering gallery after gallery, "priced nothing [so to speak] spoke no word, and looked at all the objects with a wild and vacant stare." Although traditional museums unintentionally accord art a commodity value, the work's value achieved value through its status, fame, and potential marketability, the viewer is asked solely to appreciate the work's visual aesthetics but never contemplate its worth outside the institution. Since *Picture This* is placed within a museum context, the active viewer is encouraged to reflect on other artworks, their social, historical, political, economic, and cultural construction with the label "art," and their categorization within art history. Working in sync with this approach, the concrete map of North Carolina making up the letter "I" documents important events and their corresponding locations within the state. Plaques illustrating Black Mountain College and the North Carolina School of the Arts are labeled as important historic locations as well as the site of Babe Ruth's first professional home run. By selecting historical markers and creating plaques for hers and others statements, Kruger has recorded and reconstructed an alternate narrative valuing the underrepresented history of minorities at NCMA. In one of the quotations included in the letter "E," English writer Virginia Woolf states: "Nothing has really happened until it has been recorded." In order to be recorded within Kruger's letter "I," the historical markers had to be approved by the state's Cultural Resources division; thus, the work points to art as a design process.⁴³ In accordance with its larger project, *Picture This* embodies a rich and inclusive history that validates the contributions of the minorities and NCMA's desire for extended education and programs for its public.

⁴³ As the author's research suggests, revisions were made concerning the proposed state marker locations for the letter "I," specifically, the state of North Carolina suggested multiple sites of interest be included in the final design.

Equally important to *Picture This* is the active participant's identification of the amphitheater, capable of seating 2,000 people comfortably and containing a large screen, 30 by 60 feet, which allows an interaction of images—both symbols and signs—to be projected alongside the museum and the piece itself. The aluminum and steel structure of the large screen is visible from multiple areas, including those for audience overflow. Correspondingly, the land is sloped for ultimate viewing pleasure. This site, being part of a public space, supports a concession and reception area, lavatories, storage facilities, and lighting equipment—all modern advancements of technology. This reconfiguration highlights the restructuring of the museum experience: creating public interaction with a re-conceptualized historical Greek or Roman historic amphitheater in a contemporary setting. The amphitheater's construction was integral to the design of the project as noted in NCMA's 1988 publication that states:

The popularity of outdoor performances and recent evening film showings on the Museum lawn led to the proposal for reworking the graded area close to the building's southwest side into a large grassy amphitheater.⁴⁴

Thus, aspects of *Imperfect Utopia* including the amphitheater highlight the collaboration between the designers and NCMA. By incorporating a film screen in close proximity to an amphitheater, based on classical models, into its architectural design that reads *Picture This*, the viewer is again asked to perceive images as art and as meta-art. This approach relates to Baudrillard's theory of simulation, this concept of re-presentation and sign exchange, which will be discussed in the next section. However, citing Aimé Césaire, one of the founders of the Négritude Movement in Francophone literature, Kruger's letter "E," warns:

⁴⁴ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 11.

And above all...beware of assuming the sterile attitude of spectator, for life is not a spectacle, for a sea of miseries is not a proscenium, a man screaming is not a dancing bear.

By providing museum goers with an active role as well as restructuring history, *Picture This* reactivates the traditional, static museum experience with its multilayered texts, re-envisioning the landscape, and reconstructs “proscenium”—stage theater, with its assumptions of a passive audience when one considers that Kruger’s work frames the stage of the amphitheater. Its title cautions viewers against the typical passivity characteristic of some museum spectators and thus *Picture This* can be interpreted as Kruger’s sardonic comment against the typical passivity of museum attendees, who tend to overlook, bypass, and depreciate outdoor art. Her work can also be connected as part of NCMA’s site for a self-reflexive view of itself and its own site and its willingness to be the meta-critical postmodernist approach to museums in general. For Kruger, the term “postmodern” is not merely the style sequentially following the modern: postmodernism is the resurfacing of critical history to elucidate the ideological associations between self-interest and power. This resurfacing becomes integral to reading *Picture This* as part of Kruger’s critique, and as research for this thesis has discovered, allusions to this work resurfaces in the catalogue for her photo-based art exhibit in New York. To be more specific, Kruger’s project *Imperfect Utopia* surfaces in her 1987 exhibition catalogue for the Mary Boone Gallery in New York City.⁴⁵ By analyzing Kruger’s text for her exhibit as well as the accompanying entry by Jean Baudrillard, this next section will propose that this catalogue was initially intended for the scheduled-then-canceled exhibition of *Imperfect Utopia*’s layout which was to be imprinted on

⁴⁵ The exhibition at Mary Boone Gallery (NYC) ran from 2 May to 30 May 1987.

NCMA's gallery floor, *The Theory* and *The Program* printed and hung on one large wall, and photographs of the park's design hung on another wall, which was to be held at NCMA from February through April 1989.⁴⁶

Barbara Kruger and Jean Baudrillard

In connection with this change of venue, Kruger's catalogue entry for her show at the Mary Boone Gallery is aptly named "Untitled." When reading her text in conjunction with viewing the displayed works at Mary Boone Gallery, there seems to be an absent referent.⁴⁷ The first few lines of her text states:

If this is Utopia, no wonder nothing is real. Enveloped by a circulatory loop of scenes, we move but remain stationary, as befits any sometimes well-meaning site of receivership. We become hazy, fugitive shapings surrounded by shiny, well-defined goods and services which display themselves to us, offer themselves up to us, implore us with a rhythm of their own.⁴⁸

Although the text relates thematically to the work exhibited in New York, the parallels between Kruger's word choice and NCMA's project *Imperfect Utopia* are uncanny. The Raleigh park

⁴⁶ According to the author's research, the dates of the exhibition were later postponed to October-December 1989 while the North Carolina State Department of Administration conducted a planning study of Blue Ridge Road.

⁴⁷ Appendix B is a list of Kruger's works exhibited at Mary Boone Gallery, NYC (1987).

⁴⁸ Kruger's "Untitled" catalogue entry from Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 6.

design was envisioned as a “circulatory” set of paths situated around the “stationary,” pre-existing museum. *Picture This* becomes the “well-meaning site” where receivers, visitors, reflect on the cultural, social, and historical construction of the viewing art, its luminary position between the museum and the landscape, and ultimately thinking about its multivalent statement, which “implores” viewers to assume responsibility for viewing art by reframing it in their own terms. Notably, at the time of the project, NCMA shared its grounds with the state’s juvenile detention center, thereby, perhaps, correlating with Kruger’s usage of the term “fugitive.”⁴⁹ This text clearly situates the viewer amid the work’s eccentric landscape: between high culture, and highbrow art museum, “defined” by its “goods and services,” and the area of meta-culture, the landscape and *Imperfect Utopia*, as well as the dwelling for incarcerating fugitives from the law.⁵⁰ Kruger’s “Untitled” entry at first appears to refer to *Imperfect Utopia* but her later phrasing also points to the project:

A generous dollop of non-specificity gives us room to circulate, we needn’t construct a world for others, a censorious image of our own (im)perfection. ... Opting for the living room rather than the stadium, we forego the spectacular shot for the slices of the close-up.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The North Carolina Museum of Art acquired the site of Polk Prison on Blue Ridge Road in 2000 through the General Assembly Legislation.

⁵¹ The sentence following this statement reads, “Besides, nothing upsets the game more than a change in the rules... Shredded totalities go the way of highly classified documents which disappear and take their secrets with them. Maybe,” from Kruger’s *Untitled* catalogue entry from Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 7.

The term “(im)perfect” appears to directly reference the title of NCMA’s *Imperfect Utopia* project, and Kruger’s use of the plural “we” in the statement “we needn’t construct a world for others” correlates with the collective’s design of an (im)perfect utopia. The last line of the statement alludes to her work’s customary favored position indoors, the “living room” as museum, rather than outside in the landscape with its amphitheater. *Picture This*’s viewers forego the “spectacular shot,” the work’s aerial perspective, in favor of “slices of the close-up,” the parts of Kruger’s phrase visible from the windows and glass elevator of the museum. Correspondingly, the publicity for *Imperfect Utopia* privileges its dissemination as a photograph—as “living room” (or gallery) wall mount—over a “spectacular shot”: created through aerial perspective.⁵²

Similar to the indirect references between Kruger’s catalogue entry and NCMA, Baudrillard’s entry is also labeled “Untitled” and suggests indirectly the project *Imperfect Utopia*. Furthering this theory that both writers were actually reflecting on the Raleigh location, Baudrillard states that a viewer can imagine Kruger’s works in “just about any size,” specifically utilizing the example of “sky writing,” followed directly by the statement, “of course one can imagine them in a gallery or museum.”⁵³ Taken in context with NCMA’s project, Baudrillard implies not only the aerial perspective of *Picture This*, but the work’s visibility from inside the

⁵² Throughout her catalogue entry, Kruger utilizes terms such as “long shot” to define the distance and expanse of the work. The aerial perspective favors the elite viewer, who can view *Picture This* via helicopter or airplane. However, the ground position of the average viewer does not favor the same readability of the phrase, see Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987). 6-8.

⁵³ Baudrillard’s “Untitled” catalogue entry from Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 5.

museum's gallery. Continuing his description of Kruger's art for the Mary Boone catalogue, Baudrillard notes her work's unorthodox position and the interior and exterior space it inhabits:

mobile orbital images meant to describe space (including interior space) rather than to occupy the fixed space of conventional art. They no longer have the constraints of the (aesthetic) proscenium; instead, they have the new freedom of the movie screen. They cannot be isolated from one another; they form a chain reaction ... whose function is thereby to provoke something like thaumaturgic (traumaturgic) vertigo ... these images have a force and function to absorb the interlocutor (YOU) and send him reeling, rather than to communicate.⁵⁴

Using Baudrillard's theory of the influx of simulacra, there is no longer a difference or space between image and architecture: simulacrum is image; simulacrum is architecture. His use of the terms *space*, *orbital*, and *vertigo* correspond with the circular layout of *Imperfect Utopia* and *Picture This*' preferred aerial perspective. Similarly, the project in Raleigh utilized the "freedom of the movie screen" by attaching one directly to NCMA's exterior wall.⁵⁵ The viewer's chain reaction to the park consists of the identification of the movie screen showcasing images (pictures) coupled with their interaction against the museum's exterior wall, which highlights the presence of the museum's frame and functions as a gallery turned inside-out. By referencing this interplay between forms, Baudrillard defines perpetual simulation. As noted earlier, according to Baudrillard, society can no longer distinguish between nature and artifice because of the

⁵⁴ Baudrillard's "Untitled" catalogue entry Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 5.

⁵⁵ The movie screen is quite large, 30 by 60 ft., and is visible from the amphitheater.

“precession of simulacra” where images and representations precede and determine the “real.” The substitution of signs of the real for the “real” is part of Baudrillard’s third level of simulacra so that the simulacrum—the image of simulation—remains.

Baudrillard’s *Simulations* (1983) can be interpreted in terms of two prior occupants to NCMA’s site: Native Americans and the prison system. In his first order of the simulacrum, Baudrillard notes the removal of “American Indians” as based on their dissimilar beliefs that could have possibly engendered the first order—the “sacramental order”—where each representation is a faithful copy of an original.⁵⁶ Likewise, while discussing his opinion of American culture, he notes “prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral.”⁵⁷ Because Blue Ridge Road had once been a site for Native Americans and a Youth Correctional Facility, Baudrillard’s interest in Kruger’s project might have been galvanized by the history of the site, but, of course, he would have been intrigued even more with her conceptual critique of museums given his interest in American culture.

⁵⁶ In his book, Baudrillard states: “We are fascinated by Rameses as Renaissance Christians were by the American Indians: those (human?) beings who had never known the word of Christ.” He adds colonizers had to choose between admitting the Gospel is not universal or exterminating the Indians in order to preserve it; however, by merely discovering (Native Americans), he states Christians in fact became responsible for their extermination. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983), 20.

⁵⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983), 25.

As part of the same book, Baudrillard clarifies his third level of simulation, where “several modalities of this vertigo of realistic simulation are possible.”⁵⁸ Relatable to Kruger’s NCMA project, he defines the four points of realistic simulation:

- I. The deconstruction of the real into details—closed paradigmatic declension of the object—flattening, linearity and seriality of the partial objects.
- II. The endlessly reflected vision: all the games of duplication and reduplication of the object in detail.
- III. The properly serial form (Andy Warhol). ...Subtle way of murdering the original, but also singular seduction, where all attention to the object is intercepted by its infinite diffraction into itself.
- IV. But this pure mechanization is doubtless only a paradoxical limit: the true generating formula, that which englobes all the others, and which is somehow the stabilized form of the code, is that of binarity, of digitality. Not pure repetition, but the minimal separation, the least amount of inflection between the two terms, that is to say the “very smallest common paradigm” that the fiction of sense could possibly support.

Using *Picture This* as a model, Baudrillard’s ideas concerning the vertigo of realistic simulation can be interpreted as follows:

First, the architectural letters forming Kruger’s phrase become linearly and serially flattened into the landscape, functioning as a deconstruction of the real into merely its details, its form. In turn, the entire phrase becomes partial letters. Second, the letter “E” reflects an endless vision of

⁵⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983), 144.

all the games of duplication and reduplication of the quotations (the object) in detail. As spoken by various historic and cultural figures, the quotations have been duplicated, transcribed, from their first enunciation, and reduplicated, and re-presented, in plaque form. Third, the embedded historical markers in their serial, mass-produced form have questioned the “truth” of the upright, originals. Lastly, the linear depiction of North Carolina for the letter “I” is not a “pure repetition” or a pure likeness, but the “minimal separation” between the “real” physical boundaries of the state and their digitally-depicted or sketched form. This replication of the state’s outline evidences the “very smallest common paradigm” that a viewer’s sense of fiction of could possibly support; therefore, the viewer questions whether his or her knowledge of the map precedes or follows its established territory. However, the questions: “does the map precede the territory;” and the inverse: “does the territory precede the map,” have both become mute in third order simulation. Production of material objects and ideas has ceased; therefore, re-production (as third order simulation) remains.

Since both Kruger’s and Baudrillard’s “Untitled” catalogue entries appear to reference *Imperfect Utopia*, a closer inspection of both texts will help define a possible reading of *Picture This*.

Kruger’s essay addresses the creation of the phrase *Picture This* in her discussion of “truth,” which has been:

splintered into an aerosol of demi-articulate self-interest which recomposes not into language, but into pictures. And although you continue to picture us, we have no desire to picture you.⁵⁹

The verb *picture* directly appears in NCMA's landscape; yet, Kruger's choice of the term "aerosol" and its basic form—air—can certainly be seen as relevant to reading the phrase. Utilizing the concept of "truth," evidenced in the letter "I" and its embedded historical markers, Kruger defines the importance of pictures within history and geography. Although both disciplines are heralded as presenting "facts," their reliance on image as an ideological construct is equivalent to that of the art world. By using examples relative to her NCMA work, American history and geography, Kruger is able to suggest the importance of image in context with the visibility and perceptibility of race, ethnicity, and gender as well as the graphic representation of maps, land territories, and state outlines. Going further with this comparison, Kruger's quote is applicable to pictures taken of Native Americans, and the consumption of exoticism in general by museums and their Western audiences. Correspondingly, Kruger's quote seems to discuss an embedded layer of meaning and representation beyond the "picture," which is relatable to Baudrillard's concept of simulation. Since society heralds (photographic) pictures as visual representations of the "real," Kruger's statement that "truth" has been recomposed graphically rather than linguistically relates to the complexities of signs.

With this in mind, the word "picture" as a stated noun highlights the egocentricity of museums, their preoccupation with their own internal word of pictures, their categorization of art objects, commodities, and the cultural implications of value expressed via pictures rather than

⁵⁹ Kruger's "Untitled" catalogue entry Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 6.

words. Coincidentally, this assumption regarding the naturalization of art as a noun (object) rather than a verb (art as a process, as an action of the viewer) correlates with the relative lack of an explanatory text concerning Kruger's work at NCMA: the main label for *Picture This* is placed beside the elevator keypad in Stone's building. Furthermore, the museum published only one small publication for this permanent installation.⁶⁰ In this sense, *Picture This* becomes a factual statement—the viewer is supposed to accept Kruger's work on a face value rather than *read* about it. Because viewers can only picture Kruger's work, the impact of images (simulacra) on linguistics is clarified by Baudrillard, who notes:

The entire system of communication has passed from that of a syntactically complex language structure to a binary system of question/answer—of perpetual *test*. Now tests and referenda are, we know, perfect forms of simulation: the answer is called forth by the question, it is design-ated in advance.⁶¹

Thus, NCMA reading of Kruger's phrase no longer concedes examining the letters or analyzing the complex language structure as currently practiced by museums, given their predominant interest in graphics over linguistics. Instead, the work is to be accepted at face value, as a "picture," becoming, as Kruger intended, a perpetual test called forth by its imperative. The phrase operates as Baudrillard's "perfect form of simulation," in which the "answer is called forth by the question," its museum viewing and "art" label has been design-ated in advance.

⁶⁰ The publication is Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989).

⁶¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983), 117.

Regarding the analysis of the landscape in his catalogue entry, perhaps the possible way to interpret *Picture This*, Baudrillard states that all objects, even *natural* objects, wish to signify and to be read:

You only think you are photographing a scene or a landscape. In fact, the scene or the landscape *wishes* to be photographed. It determines you; you are merely a supernumerary in its staging, secretly moved by the self-publicizing perversion of the surrounding world.⁶²

According to Baudrillard, himself a photographer of note, the irony is that the subject is no longer at the origin of the process; it is an instrument of the world's objective irony; only the extensive network of simulacra remains.⁶³ Thus, *Picture This* illustrates the ironic advancement of the simulated object over the defeated viewer (the subject); when this viewer/subject attempts to picture the works, simulation overcomes and overwhelms this individual's attempts to visually and mentally perceive of it as a non-simulated object. No longer a producer but a re-producer, the viewer is overcome by simulacra. Therefore, *Picture This* defines itself on a physical level as picture, and simulacra, and on a conceptual level as meta-picture, or third order simulacra. Kruger's New York catalogue reference to *Imperfect Utopia* is understandable since she contributed to its design; however, Baudrillard's reference and his interest in the project, as the subject of his catalogue entry, will need to be clarified.

⁶² Baudrillard's "Untitled" catalogue entry, Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 3.

⁶³ Baudrillard's "Untitled" catalogue entry, Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 3.

Because Kruger and Baudrillard both worked at *Artforum*—Kruger wrote the television column “Remote Control” (1985-1990) and Baudrillard was a contributing editor for the magazine (1984-1985)—and because both spent time in California, the pair more than likely interacted prior to Kruger’s Mary Boone Gallery exhibit in 1987. Regardless of whether Baudrillard was intimately familiar with NCMA project, he unquestionably would have been interested in its title. Baudrillard’s fascination with utopian theory predated NCMA’s selection of *Imperfect Utopia*. In his book *America*, published 1986, Baudrillard entitled a chapter “Utopia Achieved,” in which he discusses America’s lack of origins and culture. According to this chapter, America is without a past and a founding *truth* and is thus relegated to perpetual simulation, the perpetual presence of signs, as noted in Kruger’s *Picture This*. By clarifying Baudrillard’s perspective of utopia, as stated in “Utopia Achieved,” the reasons for his interest in *Imperfect Utopia* becomes apparent.

According to Baudrillard’s chapter, America’s sense of freedom results from freeing itself from historical centrality. Americans built a utopia sheltered from history and:

live in a paradox (for a realized utopia is a paradoxical idea). . . .since the charm of American (un)culture derive [sic] precisely from the sudden and unprecedented materialization of models.⁶⁴

This country’s utopic ideals function similarly to its belief in facts, truth, and naïve materiality. As defined earlier, *Imperfect Utopia* confronts paradoxical utopic ideals and historical figures of America’s (un)culture in terms of their overt materiality. By contrasting the U.S. with Europe,

⁶⁴ Baudrillard’s “Utopia Achieved” chapter from Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1989),78.

Baudrillard notes that America's lack of historical relevance results not in culture, the European model, but in "unculture," a distinctly national, materialistic form. Undoubtedly aware of Kruger's interest in culture and unculture, Baudrillard writes "publicity"—"what you are worth, what you earn, how you live,"—is manifested within American unculture along with cinema and advertising.⁶⁵ This unculture coincides with his notion of "anti-utopia," which was then in the process being developed:

the anti-utopia of unreason, of deterritorialization, of the indeterminacy of language and the subject, of the neutralization of all values, of the death of culture.⁶⁶

Anti-utopia parallels the theory of *Imperfect Utopia*; in fact, the project's initial proposal *The Theory* utilized a similar phrasing, asking to "re-naturalize," "question the priorities of style and taste," "anticipate change and invite alteration," and "construct a cycle of repair and discovery." Baudrillard clarifies his argument of anti-utopia by contrasting its location with the home of utopian paradise, California, specifically Santa Barbara and Disneyland, which, as mentioned earlier, has been Kruger's primary state of residence. These superficial and desolate sites, according to Baudrillard, become true fictional space.⁶⁷ Kruger's *Imperfect Utopia*, as a site of

⁶⁵ Baudrillard's "Utopia Achieved" chapter from Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1989), 86.

⁶⁶ Baudrillard's "Utopia Achieved" chapter from Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1989), 97.

⁶⁷ Baudrillard notes that Paul Getty's gathering of art—Rembrandt, Impressionists, and Greek statues, in a Pompeian villa on the Pacific coast—is "following the American logic, the pure

unculture and anti-utopia, uncovers such a fictional space, which can be considered another name for ideologically constructed spaces, artificial situations naturalized through familiarity and social reproduction. Specifically, the letter “I” of *This* displays the state motto of North Carolina: “To Be Rather Than to Seem,” which seems to exemplify a simulacral lack of depth and superficiality. When considered in terms of Kruger’s work, the state motto seems to hint at the superficial and simulacral materiality of American (un)culture if connected as a way of questioning the foundations, history, and simulation of society. And *Imperfect Utopia*, located in North Carolina-state grounds, as indirectly referenced later by Baudrillard in his “Untitled” catalogue entry, appears as the anti-utopian, uncultured Disneyland for the art world.⁶⁸

Summarizing these points, it is possible to consider *Imperfect Utopia* as the focus of Kruger’s exhibition at Mary Boone Gallery in 1987. Since both Baudrillard’s and Kruger’s “Untitled” catalogue entries employ references that allude to both *Imperfect Utopia* and *Picture This*, the question arises: why does this work appear in New York? The answer may be found in Kruger’s text, in which she notes the “utopias” of revered constructions of belief:

Something which has no need for utopias of sacred structures of belief, and finds power’s disingenuous attempts at invisibility and self-effacement to be as

baroque logic of Disneyland.” Baudrillard’s “Utopia Achieved” chapter from Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1989), 101.

⁶⁸ Perhaps its location is better suited for California rather than North Carolina, as noted in the collective’s design entry “Un-Occupied Territory: An Economic Ecology” for the 1989 LA Arts Park Competition, which Smith-Miller, Hawkinson, Quennell, and Kruger were selected as finalists, for more information see Laurie Hawkinson et al., “Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory,” *Assemblage*, no. 10 (December 1989).

predictable as a not so hot rerun ... Something of a body, a fleshy concretion
capable of a bit more than just petty wiles.⁶⁹

Kruger's concept of power no doubt informed by the writings of French theorist Michel Foucault, who notes "power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere" so that it functions as a "meta-power" and "regime of truth" that remains constantly in flux and negotiation.⁷⁰ This challenge to undermine the power of (imperfect) "utopias of sacred structures of belief," the venerated edifices, and ideological propositions of traditional museum settings, are inherent in *Imperfect Utopia*. The location of *Picture This* highlights the (im)perfect utopia of the art world and its critique of the so-called "sacred structure" of museums, sanctified by the reverence accorded to its objects and the veneration bestowed on its environment, as well as its seemingly invisible body of power, which urges viewers to consider art only under its specific reception and protocols. *Imperfect Utopia* is much more than a park layout or a phrase written on the landscape, it is a body of theories, programs, collaborators, art objects, and modes of viewer orientation that seeks to shape and redefine the experience of museum (un)culture.⁷¹ By functioning as the "anti-utopia of unreason," and as the embodiment of American unculture,

⁶⁹ Kruger's "Untitled" catalogue entry Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 8.

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley. *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (Vol.1 Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998), 63.

⁷¹ In a group interview about the *utopian project*, Kruger clarifies their intentions: "We are not enchanted by the formalities, beauties, and fantasies of a utopian project that works to efface the body. We are more concerned with the vulnerabilities of bodies, the recognition of differences, and the amplification of their voices." Laurie Hawkinson et al., "Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory," *Assemblage*, no. 10 (December 1989): 44.

Imperfect Utopia is obviously relatable to a wealth of material, theories, and practitioners. Accordingly, the work's readings are complex and purposefully open.

CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

The creative team responsible for *Imperfect Utopia*—Kruger, Hawkinson, Smith-Miller, and Quennell—continued their collaboration on the Elliot Bay Waterfront Project in Seattle (1989), and created a design *Un-Occupied Territory: An Economic Ecology* for the Arts Park-LA International Competition (1989). Smith-Miller and Hawkinson also re-envisioned Kruger’s residence and studio in East Hampton, New York (1990) as well as her residence in Los Angeles, California (1992).

Following the project’s completion, *Imperfect Utopia* received numerous national awards: the AIA New York Architecture Citation (1996), the United States Institute for Theater Technology Honor Award (1997), and the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC) /American Institute of Architects (AIA): Innovative Design and Excellence in Architecture with Steel (I.D.E.A.S.) Honorable Mention Award (1998). Yet, the literature on Kruger’s *Picture This* and the project *Imperfect Utopia* dates primarily to the decades of its construction: the 1980s and 1990s. Although photographs of *Picture This* have been included in recent important publications, including Kruger’s 2010 catalogue raisonné, the relative absence of critical analysis of this major work is notable. Most of the literature concerning this project is contemporaneous with *Imperfect Utopia*’s selection, construction, and unveiling. Since NCMA site has undergone drastic changes in recent years, decades after the critical published writings on the work, this

chapter's goal is to outline the development and understand the evolvement of both *Picture This* and *Imperfect Utopia*.

As part of *Imperfect Utopia*'s design, the Joseph M. Bryan, Jr. Theater opened in April 1997, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1947 state legislation mandate and funding of an art museum. The 500-seat outdoor theater, with lawn seating for 2,000, annually hosts outdoor films, musical performances, and concerts as well as features a picnic area for events. In an effort to accommodate outdoor foot traffic, along with the support of the N.C. Department of Transportation, the first Museum Park Trail was completed in 1999, featuring a mile-long loop for pedestrians and bicyclists. The trail system was expanded in 2000 when the North Carolina legislature granted NCMA a parcel of land from the former, neighboring Polk Youth Prison.⁷² Presently encompassing 164 acres, NCMA is now the largest museum art park in the country. Connecting to the Capital Area Greenway system, the park's two-miles of trails, which are frequently traveled by cyclists, dogs, runners, and tourists, foster an experience of art in nature. Over a dozen commissioned artworks have been placed in the landscape of rolling fields, woodlands, and meandering creeks. The park also serves as a laboratory for environmental experimentation and ecological restoration through partnerships with local organizations and institutions. Similarly, a retention pond was redesigned in 2010 to clean storm water before it enters the area's streams and rivers. In order to facilitate collaborations between artists, architects, landscape designers, and environmental scientists, the Museum Park program, following the goals stipulated in its earlier *Art + Landscape* competition, has initiated a new program for art in the landscape.

⁷² The 24 acres of the Youth Prison Center allotted to NCMA in 2000 finalized part of *Imperfect Utopia*'s plan that was to extend the museum site to its outer limits.

In accordance with the land grant in 2000, NCMA's director Lawrence Wheeler revealed an expansion strategy for the site in order to create additional space for exhibitions as well as public and educational programs. This project set forth the construction of a new museum to house the permanent collection as well as the renovation of Stone's original building. Utilizing the preexisting design framework of *Imperfect Utopia*, which sought to interweave art with nature, Thomas Phifer and Partners were selected to design the new gallery building. Speaking on behalf of NCMA, Gottlieb notes:

What made more sense for us in terms of really moving out into the park and understanding our site was to build a new expression of architecture that would be a sister building to the current building. It would be pretty close to the polar opposite, from very opaque to very transparent, which is very much in keeping with the larger philosophy of opening our collection up to nature, the landscape of the Park.⁷³

Serving as a foil to Stone's building, Phifer's single-story, 127,000 square foot West building contains elements such as fiberglass coffers topped with oculi in the ceiling, anodized aluminum panels, and glass walls. Completed in 2010, the West Building is organized around a long sculpture hall, interconnecting forty exhibition galleries and five outdoor courtyards.⁷⁴

⁷³ Carol Ann Douglas, "Transformation of the North Carolina Museum of Art," (Master's thesis, North Carolina State University, 2009), 15 (repr., Lawrence Lippard, "Architecture for Art, Art for the People," North Carolina Museum of Art, NC State University, entry posted November 16, 2012, <http://lwlippar.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2012/11/16/architecture-for-art-art-for-the-people/> accessed September 7, 2013).

Essentially a simple, one-story box with five transparent sections, the structure's exterior is fifty percent glass. Drawing elements of Louis Kahn's design for the Kimbell Art Museum, completed thirty years earlier, Phifer's contemporary and sleek design features dramatic roof lines and an exterior comprised of aluminum panels and glass that reflects the outdoor light. Inside, the main corridor connects galleries, none of which has four corners, in a non-chronological order, prompting visitors to travel freely through the space. Interpreted as communal areas rather than isolated chambers, the layout mimics the loops of the Museum Park Trails.

Coinciding with NCMA's large land grant, the building was conceived to mirror the green principles and sustainability projects occurring contemporaneously on the site. Allowing natural light to penetrate both the ceiling and the glass façade, the building itself features enhanced energy-efficient systems as well as reflecting pools and outdoor sculpture patios that serve as complements to the landscape. Similarly the curtain walls highlight the groves of trees and the rolling hills encircling the building. Publications on the West Building have noted that Phifer's structure appears to be a warehouse when seen at a distance; however, as one approaches, the low-height of the structure disappears into the surrounding environment. According to the architect, the building is intentionally juxtaposed against Stone's; the entry court serves as Phifer's adaptation of the southern porch vernacular between two distinct forms.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ The North Carolina Museum of Art, "Expansion," The North Carolina Museum of Art, <http://ncartmuseum.org/expansion/> (accessed October 2, 2013).

⁷⁵ Thomas Phifer, "Interview with Thomas Phifer: Principal, Thomas Phifer and Partners and Design Architect, North Carolina Museum of Art Expansion Initiative," interview by the North Carolina Museum of Art, <http://www.ncartmuseum.org/pdf/interview.pdf>, (New York, August

As connected to the landscape via its glass enclosures, perhaps in homage to Stone's unfulfilled vision, Phifer's West Building initiates a greater interaction with the site, with Stone's building, and with the park's circulatory paths and trails.

Funded by the State of North Carolina, Wake County, and the City of Raleigh, the \$72.3 million construction of Phifer's West building was not the only substantial addition on the site. The East building's \$7.6 million renovation, completed in the fall of 2010, included an expanded box office and renovated lobby, which, according to the museum's publications, "will better serve NCMA's family and public programs, library, administrative and storage facilities."⁷⁶ Although both buildings were updated contemporaneously to each other, the only obvious parallel between them are their dualistic names—East and West—which identify the common space both buildings share. The idea of space as the interval or distance between two points correlates with the ideological, physical, and aesthetic separation of the East from the West building. As stated by Gottlieb, the buildings would in fact become "polar opposite," yet, Phifer's architecture served to continue NCMA's outreach in the landscape.

In his book *Utopias and Architecture*, Nathaniel Coleman states that although architects must invent what is non-existent, they "must always begin with an idea of something located somewhere; this paradoxical situation suggests that all future projects have a past, just as present

2006), 6 (repr., Lawrence Lippard, "Architecture for Art, Art for the People," North Carolina Museum of Art, NC State University, entry posted November 16, 2012, <http://lwlippar.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2012/11/16/architecture-for-art-art-for-the-people/> accessed September 7, 2013).

⁷⁶ The North Carolina Museum of Art, "Expansion," The North Carolina Museum of Art, <http://ncartmuseum.org/expansion/> (accessed October 2, 2013).

and previous ones do.”⁷⁷ In this sense, space is not restricted linearly, but maintains connections to a diverse web of interrelated events, theories, and objects. With the intention of expanding the museum, recent developments at NCMA have become intertwined with the theories of the *Art + Landscape* competition and *Imperfect Utopia*. Correspondingly, the concept of utopia exists in limitless space; it cannot be bounded by time or by a restricted definition. In this sense, the Phifer building furthered Stone’s and NCMA’s initial intention to expand the museum programs into the larger site. Reflecting the unsatisfied nature of design and architecture, *Imperfect Utopia* upholds its theory for NCMA site as an adaptable park layout constructed via boundless zones, amendable to a plethora of designers, artists, and architects. Thus, *Imperfect Utopia* serves as an oxymoron and critique of traditional methods of museum architecture, specifically, those that seek utopia (perfection) in a short construction phase. Twenty plus years after its initial selection, the plan itself is coming closer to fruition.

When drawing closer to the actualization of a utopia, forces habitually rise to confront and dissuade its believers; namely because utopia is unreachable and unattainable. Thus, in its postmodern context, utopia is synonymous with disappointment. Coleman continues, “no true utopian is comfortable with the title of *Utopian*, precisely because such designation is tantamount to marginalization and rejection.”⁷⁸ In this sense, both the designers and the museum foresaw problems (past, current, and future) regarding *Imperfect Utopia*’s development. The complexities of *Imperfect Utopia*’s title and its multivalent meanings are clarified by Baudrillard, who speaking on the intricacies of meaning, states:

⁷⁷ Nathaniel Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture* (Abingdon [England]: Routledge, 2005), 9.

⁷⁸ Nathaniel Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture* (Abingdon [England]: Routledge, 2005), 234.

All appearances conspire to combat meaning, to uproot meaning, whether intentional or not, and to convert it into a game, according to some other rules of the game, arbitrary ones this time, to some other elusive ritual, more adventurous and more seductive than the mastery of meaning.⁷⁹

In this sense, the game to find meaning in *Imperfect Utopia* as well as Kruger's phrase remains endless, ever-changing, and ironically self-reflective. *Imperfect Utopia*'s longevity and survival are paradoxical: the plan was never a bounded construction but rather a space for the fostering of ideas. Similarly, the only stationary elements of this game—to locate meaning—are that viewers continue to *picture this*, and NCMA, like most such institutions, remains imperfectly utopian.

Other Museum Critiques

From the age of the Enlightenment, the museum has been regarded as an apparatus for educating the public. However, some museums value the sensory experience of art over its pedagogical capabilities. Rejecting the idea that they present a biased view of their collection, these museums claim they endorse the canons of objective scholarship. Although some such institutions in the twenty-first century have become aware of their paradoxical and elite modes of presentation, many institutions still function as sacred temples and shrines to cultural treasures. Inside these structures, rarefied spaces implicitly demand quiet, intrapersonal contemplation **of viewers**; notably, these gallery areas are antithetical to today's interactive, technological world.

As a pioneer of critiquing the quasi-hallowed spaces, Marcel Duchamp, along with the Dadaists and Surrealists, parodied the museum and its history as well as highlighted its triviality.

⁷⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 153.

Duchamp's interest in restructuring the viewer's experience as well as reconfiguring the site of his work's display helped initiate a closer relationship between the artist and museum. Before, museums served as the standard intermediary (in addition to salons) between art and the public. Similarly based on a romanticized definition, artists were viewed in contrast to the elite structure and ideology of museums and consequently were distanced from them. Duchamp's criticism of museums, specifically their practices, theories, and methods of display, led to his work as an advisor for the personal collections of Louise and Walter Arensberg as well as Katherine Drier and his consequent influence on prestigious institutions, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the Museum of Modern Art. Despite his critique of museum's practices, never completely antagonistic and always productive in transforming objects and information into art, Duchamp's works were accepted and considered part of these institutions' introspective views. Following Duchamp's legacy of constructive critique that impacted this institution's ideological composition, the relationship between the artist and museum, as a coexisting and cohabitating pair, has remained in flux.

Although countless artists in recent years have utilized the museum as a foil in their works, the artistic production of the late 1960s drastically broke with tradition and challenged the physical and conceptual structure of the building at hand. For example, the artist Christo proposed a project in 1968 that would wrap the Museum of Modern Art in cloth, thereby reversing the customary position of art as enclosed in a museum by enacting art to envelop a museum. In doing so, Christo questions not only the necessity of the building but also the type of artistic possession it takes over its structure. In addition to proposing wrapping the museum, Christo requested the entrances be blocked by a 441 barrel structure. His project, which was

never actualized in New York, sought to appropriate, conceal, control, and undermine the institution. By wrapping a linguistic phrase around the base of NCMA and by covering a side wall with a movie projection screen, Kruger's *Picture This* and the greater project of *Imperfect Utopia* are descendants of Christo's earlier investigations. Yet, the theories articulated by a group of conceptual artists, contemporaneous to Christo, provide the basis for Kruger's later joint effort on *Imperfect Utopia*.

Identified by their post-studio practices of the 1970s, artists Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, and Daniel Buren (to name the leaders of this trend) have become synonymous with the concept of institutional critique. In terms of a basic definition, institutional critique is art that exposes the structures and logic of museums and galleries. Their approach seeks to make visible the historically and socially constructed boundaries between inside and out, public and private. Critical of the false separations made between distinctions of taste and supposedly disinterested aesthetic judgment, institutional critique affirms that taste is a concept cultivated by the institution without respect to differences in class, ethnicity, sexuality, or gender. In regards to creating works dealing with the subject of institutional critique, Asher removed a crucial wall that separated the office spaces from view in order to frame the Los Angeles' Claire Copley Gallery's business operations (1974); Buren in his first solo exhibition at Milan's Apollinaire Gallery (1968) blocked this business's only entrance door with a striped support; Broodthaers conceived and directed a fictional museum the *Museum of Modern Art, (19th Century Section)*, *Department of Eagles* (1968); and Haacke in his 1970 *MoMA Poll* asked visitors of the Museum of Modern Art in New York to vote on a socio-political issue concerning Nelson Rockefeller, a major donor and board member of the museum. Exposing the museum as

a political force, Haacke comments, “Every museum is perforce a political institution, no matter whether it is privately run or maintained and supervised by a governmental agency.”⁸⁰ Citing U.S. Congress’s establishment of the NEA in 1965, Haacke conjectures that the additional source of funding makes museums liable to government agencies. Thus, institutional critique in these artists’ works was used in part as a means to combat the bureaucracy within the art world and the heretical unexamined role as art’s agent.

Yet, institutional critique is neither a singular nor a fixed movement. Continuing this approach, artists such as Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, and Renée Green are part of a second generation in the 1980s practicing the theory. As this thesis will contend, Kruger’s *Picture This* can be analyzed in accordance to the theory of institutional critique as clarified by conceptual artist Andrea Fraser.

Working at the same time as Kruger, New York-based performance artist Andrea Fraser uses the theory of institutional critique for her *Museum Highlights* (1989) where she posed as a tour guide at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Adopting a fictional persona, Fraser led participants to the galleries, restrooms, cafeteria, and museum store. At these uncustomary locations, Fraser discussed the spaces and objects in verbose, over-dramatic art historical terms. Parodying the institution and covering such topics as corporate and private sponsorship, Fraser’s gallery talks question the museum and its practices. In constructing an alternative narrative in unlikely museum spaces, Fraser’s theories correlate with those of Kruger’s *Picture This*: her constructed narration appearing in the museum’s landscape.

⁸⁰ Hans Haacke, “Museums, Managers of Consciousness,” (1983) *Art in America*, no. 72 (February 1984), 12.

Speaking of her position as a producer, Fraser defines artistic practice as “counter-practice within the field of cultural production.”⁸¹ Art—whether object, representation, or idea—is predicated on discourses and practices that recognize, evaluate, and consume the work as “art.” Because artists are dependent on the museum as endorser, advertiser and consumer, the institution is not external to art but rather internal. Determined aesthetically as well as socially, art’s irreducible existence as “art” prefigures an institutional label. Using her conception of institutional critique, Fraser explains the predetermined space for artists:

The relations I might want to transform may be relations in which I feel myself to be a victim or a perpetrator. The ethical dimension of the imperative of site specificity, however, pertains entirely to my status as a perpetrator, that is, of the agency and authority accorded me as a producer, and as the subject of discourse, by the institutions in which I function. So when it comes to institutional critique, I am the institution’s representative and the agent of its reproduction. I am the enemy. And I cannot be slain in absentia, in effigy.⁸²

The ethical dimension of Kruger’s imperative of site specificity—*Picture This*—pertains entirely to the work’s status as perpetrator, as naming and labeling itself a picture, that is, of the agency and authority accorded to it as “art.” Likewise, *Picture This* becomes the subject of its discourse, by the institution (museum) in which it functions. As the institution’s representative,

⁸¹ Andrea Fraser, “An Artist’s Statement,” (unknown edition) in *Place Position Presentation Public*, ed. Ine Gevers (Amsterdam: De Baile, 1998), 62.

⁸² Andrea Fraser, “An Artist’s Statement,” (unknown edition) in *Place Position Presentation Public*, ed. Ine Gevers (Amsterdam: De Baile, 1998), 63.

Picture This, and its title explains the agent of its reproduction. Oddly functioning as the both the enemy and representative in terms of institutional critique, neither the work nor its artist (Kruger) can be slain in absentia, in effigy. Within the imperative statement itself, Kruger investigates the act in which representation creates subjects by questioning the label of art: is the artwork the letters, the reading of the letters, or the viewing of the statement? Functioning as an intermediary between the artist and the museum, *Picture This* serves as the museum's personification by directly quoting the institution's imperative: to "picture this," and this and this, etc. as art. Yet, the phrase and its embedded elements epitomize an alternative history of the site and the state, which justify a re-conceptualized museum "to be, rather than to seem"—this motto of North Carolina is featured in the "I" of the word *This*.

Before discussing Kruger's critique of museums, it is imperative to note that her commentary provides another interpretation of her phrase *Picture This*; however, this analysis should not be seen as the only, absolute reading. This thesis will justify both Kruger's and the museum's intentions regarding *Picture This* and *Imperfect Utopia* without prejudicing either.

Kruger is convinced that visitors of museums are unaware of the actual reasons regarding their visit, except for a need to affiliate with what they think is "high-class *culcha*."⁸³ For this reason, Kruger is not an avid museum attendee, she states, "every time I go I remember the kind of staging ground for *power* that they can be."⁸⁴ Interested in dislocating power, Kruger placed a quotation by Frederick Douglas inside the letter of "E" that reads: "power conceded nothing

⁸³ W. J. T. Mitchell and Barbara Kruger, "An Interview with Barbara Kruger," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1991): 442.

⁸⁴ W. J. T. Mitchell and Barbara Kruger, "An Interview with Barbara Kruger," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1991): 444.

without a demand. It never did and it never will.” Thus, *Picture This* can be interpreted as Kruger’s demand against the power of the institution, which according to the artist promotes the ideology of “high-class *culcha*.”

Sharing similar sentiments, Fraser’s description of museum culture articulates the narratives Kruger’s art typically seeks to dispel:

If culture consists of the narratives, symbolic objects and practices, with which a particular group represents its interests and its experiences, its history and possible futures, fine art represents the interests and experiences first of the professional community of primarily middle-class artists who produce it, and second of the bourgeois patrons who collect it and re-present it in museums under their own names.⁸⁵

Describing the museum’s educational purpose, Fraser notes the promotion of art as the symbol of bourgeois privacy; in fact, she states, the museum publicizes privacy.⁸⁶ By abstracting popular culture from its social location and placing it within the confines of hallowed art spaces, traditional art museums turn bourgeois domestic culture and specialized artistic culture into public culture. The public becomes inducted into this education that offers recognized artists, according to Fraser, “an exclusive prerogative to produce culture and discourse, to possess legitimate cultural opinion.” Kruger’s work utilizes people, places, and events—some forgotten,

⁸⁵ Andrea Fraser, “Notes on the Museum’s Publicity,” *Lusitania* I (Fall 1990), 52.

⁸⁶ Andrea Fraser, “Notes on the Museum’s Publicity,” *Lusitania* I (Fall 1990), 51.

misplaced, and others diminished in impact—in order to redefine and re-present the cultural history of the state and the museum.

As part of her challenge against bourgeois culture and the inherent capitalist practices of the institution, Kruger asks in a plaque from the letter “E”: “Who is bought and sold?” According to its early publication for *Imperfect Utopia*, NCMA initiated a \$10-million-dollar capital campaign to fund the park’s design and construction.⁸⁷ With the large amount of money allocated for the project, Kruger is obviously aware of the money’s inherent *power*; she states, “I live and speak through a body ... formed by the velocity of power and money.”⁸⁸ However, this body, the institution, did not completely stifle the power of Kruger’s work. *Imperfect Utopia* and *Picture This* enabled the displacement of clichés about art as process rather than object. The project’s lack of finality as well as its adjustable and adaptable forms illustrate the ideal of a museum’s acceptance of art as process, given its multiple adjustments, over art as finalized object.

In Patricia Fuller’s catalogue entry for NCMA’s publication on *Imperfect Utopia*, monetary concerns were preconceived as part of the project’s design. Fuller writes, “The plan is structured in a series of phases, to be accomplished over time as funds are available.”⁸⁹ Viewed as self-contained projects, each intervention would be conceived and funded independently; however, the totality of *Imperfect Utopia*’s plan would be visible as seen through the public’s

⁸⁷ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 2.

⁸⁸ W. J. T. Mitchell and Barbara Kruger, “An Interview with Barbara Kruger,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1991): 435.

⁸⁹ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 1.

interaction with the site. In a later interview with the design team, Kruger notes that in architecture, “there seems to be a relatively direct and constant client relationship that must be motored by infusions of capital in order to proceed.”⁹⁰ Aware of the requisite financial support for *Imperfect Utopia*, the designers and NCMA allocated separate budgets for each phase of the project.

Critiquing the methodology of other institutions for creating buildings as monuments that further disjoin art from viewers and the site itself, NCMA sought a project to foster the public’s interaction with art, architecture, and outdoor space. Expressing a similar critique of museums as monuments for the elite, artist Donald Judd notes:

The increase in the number of museums is evidently not so much an increase in interest in contemporary art as it is an increase in an idea of monuments. As a monument the building is crucial and not its contents. ... The museums never have much money for contemporary art but they have millions for fancy buildings.⁹¹

Judd’s quote corresponds to NCMA’s interest in disavowing the ideology of museums as monuments by its seeking a plan to incorporate contemporary art and architecture into the landscape as well as to focus specifically on the contents of the site and its development.

⁹⁰ Laurie Hawkinson et al., “Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory,” *Assemblage*, no. 10 (December 1989): 29.

⁹¹ Donald Judd, “Complaints: Part II,” (1973) in Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959-1975*. (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975), 208.

In most cases, public art imposes itself on viewers more than art displayed in the museum setting since the building requires a viewer's intentional entry. On this topic, Fraser notes, "public art thus imposes aesthetic competencies as a condition, not just for self-education or social advancement, but of living in a city, of using its parks and streets."⁹² Although Kruger's colossal letters prevent the complete aesthetic consumption of her phrase, each letter individually, as form of public art, promotes the self-education and social advancement of the viewer. Likewise, each letter promotes the city of Raleigh itself: its prior inhabitants of its parks and streets. Speaking of the relationship between the art and the park in their 1988 catalogue for *Imperfect Utopia*, NCMA notes:

In the outdoors visitors will encounter works of art in a relaxed atmosphere, discovering them as much by accident as by intention. ... By commissioning artists to create such works in the landscape, the Museum will give its collection the added dimension of some of the most influential work being done today.⁹³

NCMA's guidelines clarify the learning of the site's history, the use of its Museum Park, and the walking along its trails. *Imperfect Utopia* addresses visitors both physically and theoretically. By de-naturalizing the dominant features of late capitalist culture, postmodernist art and architecture intend to subvert the conventions of "plaza plop" sculpture, reject the traditional aesthetics of outdoor public art, and produce a reinvigorated capacity for the museum and its surrounding area. For these and other reasons, postmodernist art and architecture have many critics.

⁹² Andrea Fraser, "An Artist's Statement," (1992) in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 326.

⁹³ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 13.

Serving as a testament to memory, *Picture This* asks viewers to envisage the past, including the history of the site, its original landscape and natural features, the imperfect history of the state and the country, as well the cultural figures and events long since forgotten. As sites constructed to preserve collective memory, museums are generally considered as accurate narrators of history. Changing the script in her 1991 work *Last Seen*, Sophie Calle asks the staff of Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum to describe six stolen paintings by Rembrandt, Flinck, Manet, and Vermeer by relying only on their personal memories of these works.⁹⁴ Incorporated as a text for her work, the descriptions from curators and guards differed drastically in details, and their narratives, most surprisingly, demonstrated an incomplete and inadequate substitute for the work.⁹⁵ In effect, the staff was unable to “picture this” stolen art, and, thereby, incapable of constructing reliable interpretations of it. Considered “masterpieces” by the institution, the staff's inability to formulate adequate verbal descriptions connects to Baudrillard's theory of simulation: representations are no longer equivalencies, the complex substitution for signs reveal many convolutions. Since art museums are accustomed to featuring masterpieces in their permanent collections, a familiar narrative is rehearsed continuously in their spaces. Because history is never seamless, the concept of a unified vantage point—for which one could read Kruger's phrase—exists only in an imperfect utopia.

Although some scholars view institutional critique as a theory confined to a particular set of artists in a given period, its concepts still matriculate in the art world. As part of the 2005 Los

⁹⁴ On March 18, 1990, five drawings by Degas, one vase, one Napoleonic eagle, and six paintings were stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

⁹⁵ Sophie Calle in Kathleen Merrill Campagnolo, and Lawrence Rinder. *Sophie Calle: Proofs* (Hanover: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 1993), 26.

Angeles County Museum of Art symposium *Institutional Critique and After*, Fraser spoke of the importance of its early practitioners who helped expose and ironize the structures and logic of museums and art galleries. Commenting that their works were already institutionalized, Fraser states, “Institutional critique has *always* been institutionalized. It could only have emerged *within* and, like all art, can only function *within* the institution of art.”⁹⁶ Serving as a form of institutional critique, Kruger’s work was accepted and thereby institutionalized by NCMA. However, this does not limit its power; the museum instead of labeling, constricting, or historicizing *Picture This*, has allowed the work the freedom to publicize itself. As Baudrillard has stated:

Every form of power, every situation speaks of itself by denial, in order to attempt to escape, by simulation of death, its real agony. Power can stage its own murder to rediscover a glimmer of existence and legitimacy.⁹⁷

By staging its own simulated death as a visual picture, since the work names a possible method for interpreting it, *Picture This* rediscovers a glimmer of existence and legitimacy since its collaborative forms, signs, letters, quotations, and theories exist linguistically and externally, embodied as part of *Imperfect Utopia* as well as the recent advancements on NCMA site. Correspondingly, its position beside NCMA postulates a variety of readings.

⁹⁶ Andrea Fraser, “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,” (2005) in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 414.

⁹⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983), 37.

As part of the 1999 anthology *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, Glenn Lowry, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, writes: “the museum is no longer the home of the muses nor a center of learning or spiritual discovery, but a muse itself.”⁹⁸ The positioning of *Picture This* evidences Kruger’s interest in embodying and critiquing the museum as muse, which leads to her later installations that cover gallery spaces and museums with enlarged text. For her installation at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington D.C, running from August 2012 until December 2014, Kruger re-appropriates quotations from her letter “E” of *Picture This*, such as George Orwell’s: “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face forever.”⁹⁹ Bringing her institutional critique inside the museum structure, Kruger’s installation appears more familiar to art enthusiasts and conforms to the institution’s definition of “art.”

As one of Kruger’s earliest works to be set against the museum as backdrop, *Picture This* as part of the *Imperfect Utopia* project rewrites and redefines public art practices. Similarly, NCMA uses both *Picture This* and *Imperfect Utopia* to promote the social and cultural value of art at as contrasted against the isolated box aesthetic and ideology of traditional museums. As noted by Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka’s from Kruger’s letter “E” of *Picture*, “the greatest threat to freedom is the absence of criticism.” Criticism does not necessarily mean “to find fault” but, rather, implies a further exploration of different sides of an issue. This being said, Kruger’s interest in critique frees her work, the viewer, and the narrative of history from the auspices of

⁹⁸ Foreword by Glenn D. Lowry from Kynaston McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 6.

⁹⁹ For more information on Kruger’s installation at the Hirshhorn Museum, see Ron Rosenbaum, “Barbara Kruger’s Artwork Speaks Truth to Power,” *Smithsonian.com*, July-August 2012, under “Arts & Culture,” <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Barbara-Krugers-Artwork-Speaks-Truth-to-Power-160281585.html> (accessed October 2, 2013).

the museum, and, on the other hand, by accepting this major work, NCMA frees itself from the customary positioning and predetermined forms of art in the landscape.

CONCLUSION

Although NCMA's relocation afforded developers and ultimately museum goers an additional 164 acres of land, this institution's altered building design, the death of its lead architect, the exhaustion of state funds, and the nearby juvenile youth detention center undoubtedly created an imperfect setting. Seeking a team who would conceive of an expansion into the landscape, NCMA's national *Art + Landscape* competition resulted in the selection of an entry that critiqued the utopian pretenses of museums in general. Coupling an imperfect setting with a desired utopian landscape, where art interacts seamlessly with nature, *Imperfect Utopia's* design, created by architects Henry Smith-Miller and Laurie Hawkinson, landscape designer Nicholas Quennell, structural engineer Guy Nordenson, and artist Barbara Kruger, challenged the predominance of "plop" art by creating a site-specific park plan. As defined in the design team's proposals *The Theory* and *The Program*, *Imperfect Utopia* contrasts the openness, informality, and inclusivity of art in the landscape with the structured, rigid, and exclusive setting for art in traditional museums. Similarly, the project's lack of a finalized master plan allowed the site to critique and respond to contemporary and traditional modes of art, architecture, and landscape over time and in the future.

Having examined components of Kruger's phrase in the second chapter, a multitude of interpretations are possible. Viewed as part of her critical approach, *Picture This* questions the

museum's physical and ideological structure. Ideologically, the work underscores the main action asked by viewers: to see, to envisage, to imagine, to think, and possibly to criticize. Physically, the phrase as situated twenty feet below the main entrance of Edward Durrell Stone's building imitates a museum label. If Baudrillard is correct, there is no longer a way to distinguish the real from the artificial, and imitation and parody have ceased to exist. Baudrillard defines postmodern society in terms of its simulated substitution of the "real" for the real. Since he contributed to Kruger's 1987 NY Mary Boone Gallery catalogue, her familiarity with the French philosopher and his contemporaneous theories becomes validated since the pair expressed similar phrasing coupled with uncanny references to NCMA in their entries. In the catalogue for her Mary Boone exhibit, Kruger notes the presence in Foucauldian terms of power as both dominating and sequestering a body, which corresponds to the ideological framework established in Raleigh:

...something which has no need for utopias of sacred structures of belief, and finds power's disingenuous attempts at invisibility and self-effacement to be as predictable as a not so hot rerun.¹⁰⁰

Ultimately, the power of *Picture This* lies in its ambiguous articulation to viewers: *Picture This* (blank). This destabilizing of power is inherent in *The Theory* and *The Program of Imperfect Utopia* since the project's process is heralded over its production. As evidenced by its location, *Picture This* confronts the perfect utopia of the art world; its construction of sacred, isolated

¹⁰⁰ Kruger's "Untitled" catalogue essay, Michael Werner, ed., *Barbara Kruger* (New York: Mary Boone Gallery, 1987), 8.

structures; its seemingly invisible power to constrict narratives and shape history; and its persistent imperative to the art viewer. In a later interview with the design team, Kruger states:

We are trying to nudge the conventions of architecture and the bureaucracies of so-called public art. We hope that our projects and renditions have allowed for a kind of fast and loose exchange, tempered by a reading of how we can “put out” the least to get the most.¹⁰¹

By undermining “the conventions of architecture” and by questioning “the bureaucracies of so-called public art,” *Imperfect Utopia*’s exchange enabled the reformation of the landscape and called forth visitors from inside Stone’s building. Coinciding with *Imperfect Utopia*’s theory that highlights the importance of process over the completed work, *Picture This* functions as the advancement of the subject over object. Although the subject—the viewer—is addressed with the imperative, the concept of the object—what he or she pictures—is left open to interpretation. Utilizing the verb *picture* in her phrase, Kruger dictates to the viewer a continuous, contemporaneous action or response. However, the action’s temporality—to picture—is juxtaposed against the letter’s embedded historical markers. Thus, *Picture This* parodies itself and its location adjacent to the museum. *Picture This*, a command without a settled object, affirms the adaptability of *Imperfect Utopia*’s design plan well as the transitioning, ephemeral walls of the nearby museum and the site. Accordingly, interpretations of *Picture This* are complex and open; luckily for Kruger, as noted in her quote featured above, *Picture This* as part

¹⁰¹ Laurie Hawkinson et al., “Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory,” *Assemblage*, no. 10 (December 1989): 44.

of the “fast and loose exchange” of third order simulation will indefinitely “put out the least to get the most.”

As Kruger’s phrase *Picture This* suggests, viewers must continue to read, to picture, and, most importantly, to examine art, signs, text, as well as landscapes, museums, and institutions. As this thesis contends, Barbara Kruger pictures this museum, or any museum for that matter, as an imperfect utopia. However, this is only a singular reading of her work. As part of the letter “P” of *Picture*, Kruger pleads: “Please read between the lines.” Thus, the work ironically advocates its imperative: viewers must first *picture* simulacra in order to *read* between Kruger’s lines. As *Picture This* evidences, art exists everywhere: inside the museum and outside on the landscape. Functioning as postmodern public art, Kruger’s work coincides with Baudrillard’s conjecture that artifice is at the center of reality and, therefore, reality and artifice have ceased to exist because only the image—the picture of this—remains. Adding further, Baudrillard notes our reality has become only the reduplication of the “real” by signs of the real. Speaking of the distance from the real by its signs, he adds:

Schizophrenic vertigo of these serial signs, for which no counterfeit, no sublimation is possible, immanent in their repetition—who could say what the reality is that these signs simulate? They no longer repress anything (which is why, if you will, simulation pushes us close to the sphere of psychosis).¹⁰²

Using Baudrillard’s terms as applied to Kruger’s analytical theory, her work’s aerial perspective causes a loss of balance (vertigo) between its serial signs, and its reading elicits a state of simulation that *pushes us close to the sphere of psychosis*: for whom and to what does one

¹⁰² Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983), 152.

picture? In order to assess Kruger's *Picture This* as her perception of the institution, the work requires a reading of her phrase, an examination of each letter's embedded images, and the knowledge of third order simulation, where each representation forms a network of other complex representations, before a viewer can effectively *read* between Kruger's lines and thereby *picture this* work as her conceptual critique of museums.

Using Fraser's theory of institutional critique and Baudrillard's theory of simulation, this thesis has interpreted Kruger's *Picture This* in relation to art's meta-structure; to be more specific, the framework responsible for giving art its meaning, and for the transference of meaning between referents. With this in mind, Kruger's oversize architectural letters forming *Picture This* function as meta-structures for her embedded quotations, plaques, and historical markers. These vast letters provide the framework and enable the transference—Baudrillard called it the “game” of meaning—for assessing and interpreting the art's inner components and figures. Kruger's phrase could be understood as a suggestion that viewers “picture this” work outside, both metaphorically and physically, of the meta-structure of art and the museum edifice: Stone's building.

Despite this project's singular reading of Kruger's phrase, NCMA is neither a victim nor a perpetrator of institutional critique; moreover, the institution can institutionally critique itself. By selecting, sponsoring, and continuing to further the intersections of art in the landscape, NCMA embodied its own critique against the institutional labels of *art*, *public art*, and *architecture*. Becoming an anomaly as compared to traditional museum spaces, the park program has resourcefully blurred the lines between art and landscape. Describing their intention to interweave art with natural elements, NCMA's 1988 catalogue clarifies:

These various elements together in the landscape will create a new meeting ground between the Museum and the public, an Imperfect Utopia [sic] that will be a significant cultural resource for the State of North Carolina.¹⁰³

As a significant cultural, theoretical, and sensorial resource for the state, Kruger's *Picture This*, composed of various visual elements in the landscape, has created a "meeting ground" between the museum, public, and nature. Given its position, place, and situation, *Picture This* can be read as Kruger's critique of NCMA, its building, and her reflection on the forgotten history of the site, its occupants, and its overlooked landscape.

Alternatively, *Picture This* has become part of NCMA; its label resides inside Stone's building; the work now reflects the site's history as one of its sometimes forgotten and overlooked occupants in the landscape. If Kruger's phrase *Picture This* were considered in terms of a single overarching interpretation, it would be understood as critique-fulfilled, and thus would be utopian (if the work fulfilled Kruger's intention); but if it is assessed as it usually is, in terms of competing, alternative, or contradictory readings, this work can be appreciated as only imperfectly utopian.

¹⁰³ Patricia Fuller, ed., *Imperfect Utopia* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 3.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Quotations featured in Kruger's letter "E," starting from the top of the letter and working around the outside, then following it around the inside; same for the interior portions. (Numbered for reference purposes)

1. WILL YOU ... TREAT US AS HUMAN
BEINGS WITH ALL OUR RIGHTS?
IT IS ALL WE ASK.
-FREEDMAN'S CONVENTION, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
2. THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE
KNOWLEDGE AND THOSE
WHO CLAIM IT, WHETHER THEY
ARE SCIENTISTS AND DOGMATISTS
OPEN THE DOOR TO TRAGEDY.
-JACOB BRONOWSKI
3. WOMEN HAVE SERVED ALL THESE CENTURIES
AS LOOKING-GLASSES POSSESSING THE MAGIC
AND DELICIOUS POWER OF REFLECTING THE
FIGURE OF MAN AT TWICE ITS NATURAL SIZE.
-VIRGINIA WOOLF
4. WHO IS FREE TO CHOOSE?
5. THE REAL LEAP CONSISTS
OF INTRODUCING INVENTION
INTO EXISTENCE.
-FRANZ FANON
6. AN INVASION OF ARMIES CAN
BE RESISTED, BUT NOT AN IDEA
WHOSE TIME HAS YET TO COME.
7. GIVE YOUR BRAIN AS MUCH
ATTENTION AS YOU DO YOUR
HAIR AND YOU'LL BE A

THOUSAND TIMES BETTER OFF.
-MALCOM X

8. ALL YOU NEED IN THIS LIFE IS
IGNORANCE AND CONFIDENCE
AND THEN SUCCESS IS SURE.
-MARK TWAIN

9. IS SLAVERY
IS NOT WRONG,
NOTHING IS WRONG.
-ABRAHAM LINCOLN

10. MORAL INDIGNATION
IS JEALOUSY
WITH A HALO.
-H. G. WELLS

11. PEOPLE CALL ME A FEMINIST
WHenever I EXPRESS
SENTIMENTS THAT DIFFERENTIATE
ME FROM A DOORMAT ...
-REBECCA WEST

12. TO LIVE WITHOUT KILLING
IS A THOUGHT WHICH COULD
ELECTRIFY THE WORLD.
-HENRY MILLER

13. IN VIOLENCE WE
FORGET WHO WE ARE.
-MARY McCARTHY

14. WHEN YOU FIRST CAME WE WERE VERY MANY,
AND YOU WERE FEW; NOW YOU ARE MANY,
AND WE ARE GETTING VERY FEW,
AND WE ARE POOR.
-RED CLOUD

15. THE GREATEST THREAT
TO FREEDOM IS THE
ABSENCE OF CRITICISM.
-WOLE SOYINKA

16. WHEN THERE IS NO STRUGGLE
THERE IS NO PROGRESS.
-FREDERICK DOUGLAS
17. THERE I WAS TRAPPED.
TRAPPED LIKE A TRAP IN A TRAP.
-DOROTHY PARKER
18. WHO SEES?
19. WHO IS SEEN?
20. PICTURES COME NOT WITH
SLAVERY AND OPPRESSION
AND DESTITUTION, BUT WITH
LIBERTY, FAIR PLAY, LEISURE,
AND REFINEMENT.
-FREDERICK DOUGLAS
21. YOU CANNOT
SHAKE HANDS WITH
A CLENCHED FIST.
-INDIRA GHANDI
22. EDUCATION IS THE ABILITY
TO LISTEN TO ALMOST ANYTHING
WITHOUT LOSING YOUR TEMPER
OR YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE.
-ROBERT FROST
23. WHAT I CLAIM IS TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL,
THE CONTRADICTIONS OF MY TIME,
WHICH MAY WELL MAKE SARCASM
THE CONDITION OF TRUTH.
-ROLAND BARTHES
24. NOWHERE IN THE ANNALS OF HISTORY
DOEST THE RECORD SHOW A PEOPLE DELIVERED
FROM BONDAGE BY PATIENCE ALONE.
-ROBERT F. WILLIAMS, MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA
25. WHO IS BOUGHT AND SOLD?
26. IS OUR DEGRADATION

NECESSARY TO YOUR ELEVATION?
MUST OUR HANDS BE TIED IN
ORDER THAT YOU MAY THRIVE?
-FREDERICK DOUGLAS

27. THEY MAKE US MANY PROMISES, MORE THAN
I CAN REMEMBER, BUT THEY NEVER KEPT BUT
ONE; THEY PROMISED TO TAKE OUR LAND,
AND THEY TOOK IT.
-MANUELITO OF THE NAVAJOS

28. WHO IS BEYOND THE LAW?

29. PURITANISM: THE HAUNTING
FEAR THAT SOMEONE,
SOMEWHERE MAY BE HAPPY.
-H. L. MENCKEN

30. THE RICH ROB THE
POOR AND THE POOR
ROB ONE ANOTHER.
-SOJOURNER TRUTH

31. NOTHING HAS REALLY HAPPENED
UNTIL IT HAS BEEN RECORDED.
-VIRGINIA WOOLF

32. MEN THEIR RIGHTS AND
NOTHING MORE. WOMEN THEIR
RIGHTS AND NOTHING LESS.
-SUSAN B. ANTHONY

33. WHO IS HEALED?

34. WHO IS HOUSED?

35. PROPERLY SPEAKING, THERE ARE IN THE WORLD
NO SUCH MEN AS SELF-MADE MEN.
THAT TERM IMPLIED AN INDIVIDUAL
INDEPENDENCE OF THE PAST AND PRESENT
WHICH CAN NEVER EXIST.
-FREDERICK DOUGLAS

36. THE SECRET OF THE DEMAGOGUE

IS TO MAKE HIMSELF AS STUPID
AS HIS AUDIENCE SO THAT
THEY WILL BELIEVE THEY ARE
AS CLEVER AS HE.
-KARL KRAUS

37. I HAD REASONED THIS OUT OF MY MIND;
THERE WERE TWO THINGS I HAD A RIGHT TO,
LIBERTY AND DEATH. IF I COULD NOT HAVE ONE,
I WOULD HAVE THE OTHER, FOR NO MAN
SHOULD TAKE ME ALIVE.
-HARRIET TUBMAN

38. WHO DOES THE CRIME?

39. WHO DOES THE TIME?

40. SPEECH IS CIVILIZATION ITSELF.
THE WORD, EVEN THE MOST
CONTRADICTIONARY WORD,
PRESERVES CONTACT – IT IS
SILENCE WHICH ISOLATES.
-THOMAS MANN

41. RIGHT IS OF NO SEX –
TRUTH IS OF NO COLOR.
-FREDERICK DOUGLAS

42. HE ENTERED SHOP
AFTER SHOP, PRICED NOTHING,
SPOKE NO WORD, AND LOOKED
AT ALL THE OBJECTS WITH
A WILD AND VACANT STARE.
-EDGAR ALLEN POE

43. IF YOU WANT A PICTURE
OF THE FUTURE, IMAGINE A
BOOT STAMPING ON
A HUMAN FACE FOREVER.
-GEORGE ORWELL

44. THE BELIEVING WE DO
SOMETHING WHEN WE DO
NOTHING IS THE FIRST ILLUSION

OF TOBACCO.
-RALPH WALDO EMERSON

45. IN THE LONG RUN ...
WE ARE ALL DEAD.
-JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

46. ALL VIOLENCE IS THE
ILLUSTRATION OF A
PATHETIC STEREOTYPE.
-ROLAND BARTHES

47. HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE.
-JEAN PAUL SARTRE

48. [CENTERED]
BLIND IDEALISM IS
REACTIONARY
[/CENTERED]
-FRANTZ FRANCON

49. THE TRUE WOMAN
IS AS YET A DREAM
OF THE FUTURE.
-ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

50. WE ARE CAUGHT IN AN
INESCAPABLE NETWORK OF
MUTUALITY, TIED IN A SINGLE
GARMENT OF DESTINY.
-MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

51. THERE IS NO DOCUMENT
OF CIVILIZATION WHICH IS
NOT AT THE SAME TIME
A DOCUMENT OF BARBARISM.
-WALTER BENJAMIN

52. WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

53. AND ABOVE ALL ... BEWARE OF ASSUMING
THE STERILE ATTITUDE OF SPECTATOR, FOR LIFE
IS NOT A SPECTACLE, FOR A SEA OF MISERIES IS
NOT A PROSCENIUM, A MAN SCREAMING

IS NOT A DANCING BEAR.
-AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

54. [CENTERED]
TOBACCO IS
THE TOMB OF LOVE.
[/CENTERED]
-BENJAMIN DISRAELI

55. WHO DOES FIRST?

56. WHO LAUGHS LAST?

57. WHO WINS?

58. WHO LOSES?

59. WHO LOVES?

60. WHO HATES?

61. MEN WILL OFTEN SAY HOW THEY HAVE “FOUND
THEMSELVES” WHEN THEY HAVE REALLY BEEN
WORN DOWN INTO A GROOVE BY THE BRUTAL
AND COMPULSIVE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE.
-THOMAS WOLFE

62. SELF DEVELOPMENT IS A HIGHER
DUTY THAN SELF-SACRIFICE.
-ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

63. PREJUDICES ... ARE MOST DIFFICULT TO ERADICATE
FROM THE HEART WHOSE SOIL HAS NEVER BEEN
LOOSENED OR FERTILIZED BY EDUCATION; THEY
GROW THERE, FIRM AS WEEDS AMONG STONES.
-CHARLOTTE BRONTÉ

64. POWER CONCEDES NOTHING
WITHOUT A DEMAND.
IT NEVER DID AND IT NEVER WILL.
-FREDERICK DOUGLAS

65. WHO IS AFRAID OF IDEAS?

66. FOR HOW IMPERIOUSLY, HOW
COOLY, IN DISREGARD OF ALL
ONE'S FEELINGS, DOES THE HARD,
COLD, UNINTERESTING COURSE
OF DAILY REALITY MOVE ON!
-HARRIET BEECHER STOWE
67. WHO SPEAKS?
68. WHO IS SILENT?
69. WHO LOSES?
70. WHO SALUTES LONGEST?
71. WHO PRAYS LOUDEST?
72. THROUGH NON-VIOLENCE, COURAGE DISPLACES
FEAR; LOVE TRANSFORMS HATE. ACCEPTANCE
DISSIPATES PREJUDICE; HOPE ENDS DESPAIR;
PEACE DOMINATES WAR; FAITH RECONCILES
DOUBT. MUTUAL REGARD CANCELS ENMITY.
JUSTICE FOR ALL OVERTHROWS INJUSTICE.
-REVEREND JAMES LAWSON, RALEIGH, N. C.
73. THE MEANING OF LIFE
IS THAT IT STOPS.
-FRANZ KAFKA
74. EVERY GUN THAT IS FIRED, EVERY WARSHIP
LAUNCHED ... SIGNIFIES, IN THE FINAL SENSE,
A THEFT FROM THOSE WHO HUNGER AND
ARE NOT FED, THOSE WHO ARE COLD
AND ARE NOT CLOTHED.
-DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
75. WHO WILL WRITE THE HISTORY OF TEARS?
76. ALL CREATURES KILL – THERE SEEMS TO BE
NO EXCEPTION. BUT ... MAN IS THE ONLY ONE
THAT KILLS FOR FUN; HE IS THE ONLY ONE
THAT KILLS IN MALICE, THE ONLY ONE THAT
KILLS FOR REVENGE.
-MARK TWAIN

77. THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE
TOBACCO; IT'S THE PASSION OF
DECENT FOLK, AND WHOEVER
LIVES WITHOUT TOBACCO
DOESN'T DESERVE TO LIVE.
-MOLIÉRE

78. I WISH I LOVED THE HUMAN RACE;
I WISH I LOVED ITS SILLY FACE;
I WISH I LOVED THE WAY IT WALKS;
I WISH I LOVED THE WAY IT TALKS;
AND WHEN I'M INTRODUCED TO ONE,
I WISH I THOUGHT WHAT JOLLY FUN.
-SIR WALTER RALEIGH

79. PERHAPS THE ONLY TRUE DIGNITY
OF MAN IS HIS CAPACITY
TO DESPISE HIMSELF.
-GEORGE SANTAYANA

Appendix B: List of Kruger's twenty-two works exhibited for her 1987 show at the Mary Boone Gallery, NYC. (Numbered for reference purposes)

1. UNTITLED, 1980
(PERFECT)
PHOTOPRINT, TYPE/PAPER
32" BY 32"
2. UNTITLED, 1980
(YOUR MOMENTS OF JOY HAVE THE PRECISION OF MILITARY STRATEGY)
PHOTOGRAPH
37" BY 50"
3. UNTITLED, 1981
(YOU THRIVE ON MISTAKEN IDENTITY)
PHOTOGRAPH
60" BY 40"
4. UNTITLED, 1981
(YOUR MANIAS BECOME SCIENCE)
PHOTOGRAPH
37" BY 50"
5. UNTITLED, 1981
(YOU MAKE HISTORY WHEN YOU DO BUSINESS)
PHOTOGRAPH
72" BY 48"
6. UNTITLED, 1982
(YOU MAKE HISTORY WHEN YOU DO BUSINESS)
PHOTOGRAPH
48" BY 96"
7. UNTITLED, 1982
(WE HAVE RECEIVED ORDERS NOT TO MOVE)
PHOTOGRAPH
72" BY 48"
8. UNTITLED, 1984

(YOU ARE GETTING WHAT YOU PAY FOR)
PHOTOGRAPH
72" BY 48"

9. UNTITLED, 1984
(BUY ME I'LL CHANGE YOUR LIFE)
PHOTOGRAPH
72" BY 48"
10. UNTITLED, 1985
(WHEN I HEAR THE WORD CULTURE ... I TAKE OUT MY CHECKBOOK)
PHOTOGRAPH
138" BY 60"
11. UNTITLED, 1985
(HELP! I'M LOCKED INSIDE THIS PICTURE)
LENTICULAR PHOTOGRAPH
20" BY 20"
12. UNTITLED, 1986
(MY HERO!)
LENTICULAR PHOTOGRAPH
19" BY 19"
13. UNTITLED, 1986
LENTICULAR PHOTOGRAPH
30" BY 156"
14. UNTITLED, 1986
(GIVE ME ALL YOU'VE GOT)
PHOTOGRAPH
48" BY 60"
15. UNTITLED, 1987
(IF YOU'RE SO SUCCESSFUL, WHY DO YOU FEEL LIKE A FAKE?)
SILKSCREEN/MIRRORED GLASS
22" BY 105"
16. UNTITLED, 1987
(WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO)
PHOTOGRAPH
76 ¼" BY 48"

17. UNTITLED, 1987
(A PICTURE IS WORTH MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS)
PHOTOGRAPH
30" BY 34 1/4"
18. UNTITLED, 1987
(WHY YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE)
PHOTOGRAPH
29 3/4" BY 38 3/4"
19. UNTITLED, 1987
(YOU GET AWAY WITH MURDER)
COLOR PHOTOGRAPH
30 1/2" BY 30"
20. UNTITLED, 1987
(WHAT ME WORRY?)
PHOTOGRAPHIC SILKSCREEN/VINYL
109 1/4" BY 126 3/4"
21. UNTITLED, 1987
(ADMIT NOTHING/BLAME EVERYONE/BE BITTER)
PHOTOGRAPHIC SILKSCREEN/VINYL
100 1/4" BY 179 3/4"
22. UNTITLED, 1987
(ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?)
PHOTOGRAPHIC SILKSCREEN/VINYL
147 1/2" BY 103"

IMAGES

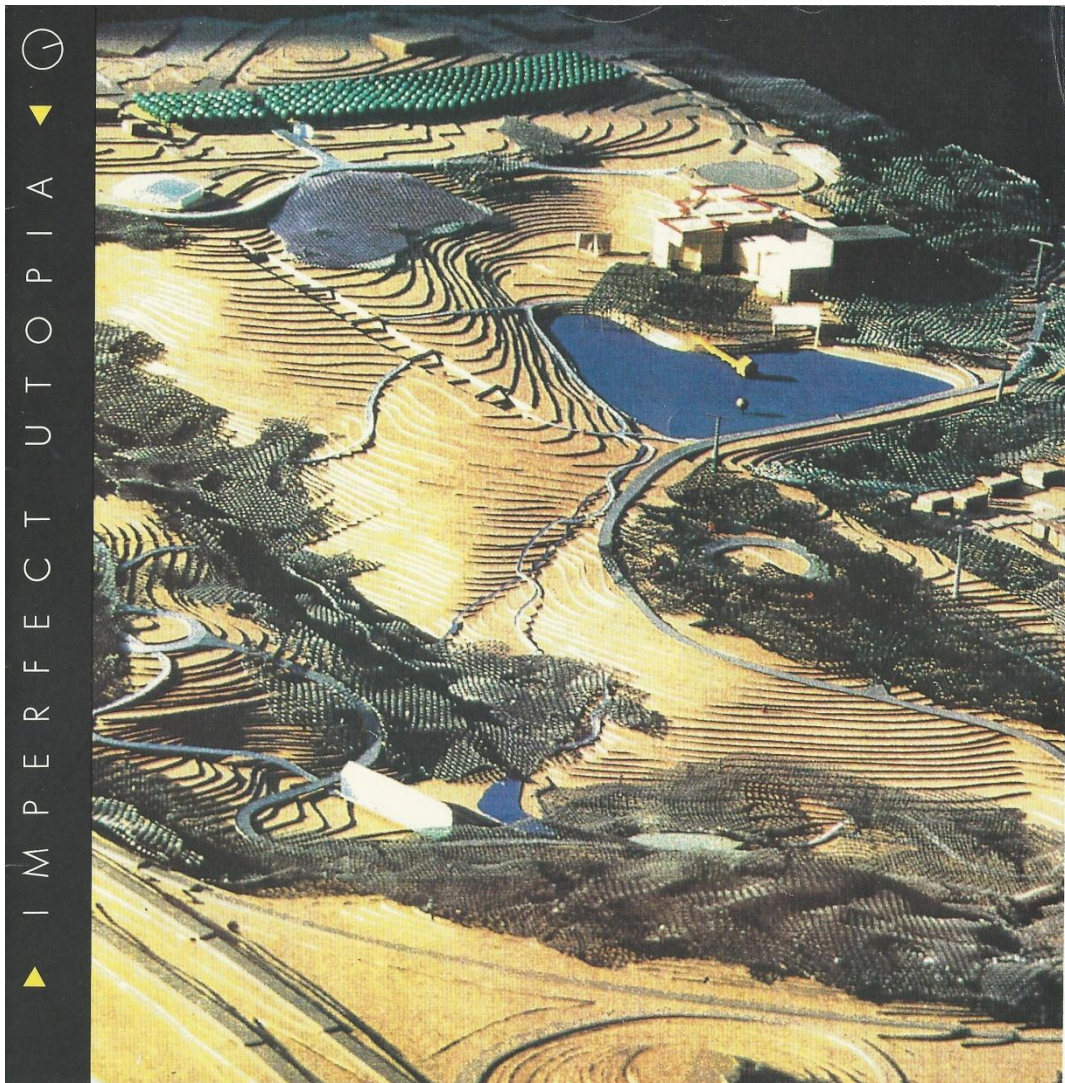
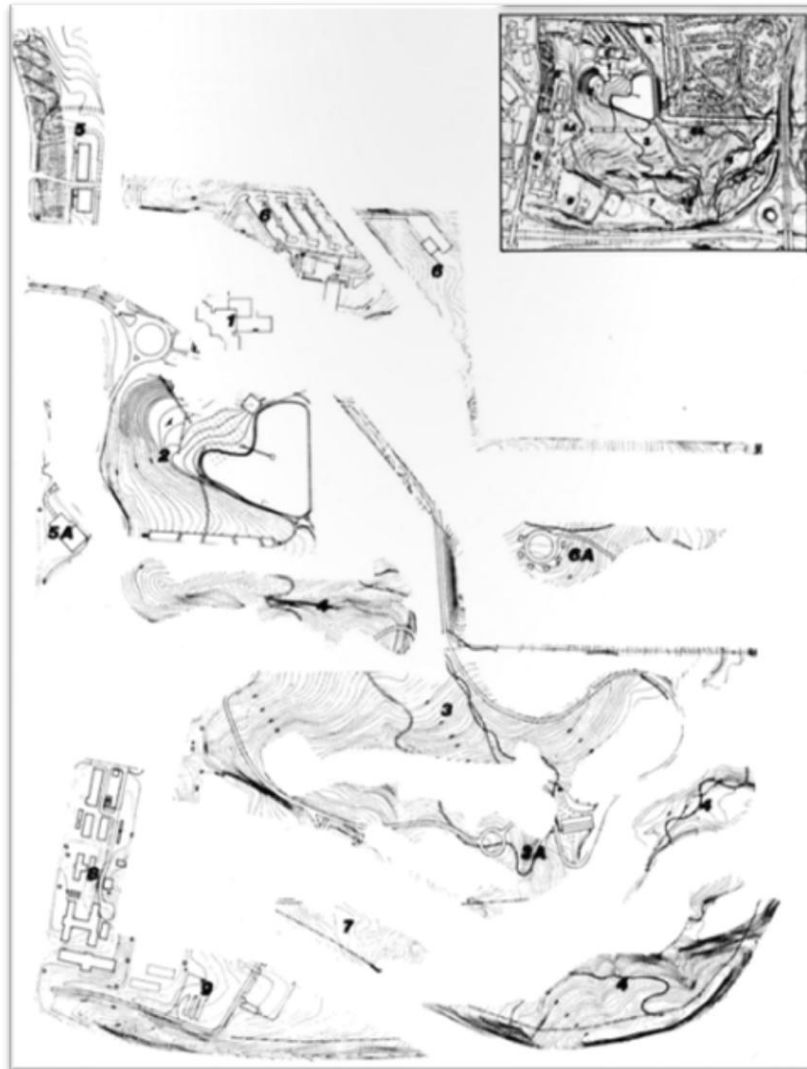


Figure 1. Cover of the 1989 *Imperfect Utopia* catalogue featuring the site model of the project, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Fuller, ed. *Imperfect Utopia*, cover).



- | | |
|--|--|
| Zone 1: Museum | Zone 6: Environmental Conservation / Buffer Zone |
| Zone 2: Active Culture | Zone 6A: Environmental Conservation / Buffer Zone and Artists Residences/Studios |
| Zone 3: Passive Culture | Zone 7: Pinetum |
| Zone 3A: Passive Culture/ Environmental Conservation | Zone 8: Related Development |
| Zone 4: Priority Environmental | |
| Zone 5: Museum Support Service Facility | |

Figure 2: North Carolina Museum of Art site plan design, 1989, (Laurie Hawkinson et al., "Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory," *Assemblage*, 9)

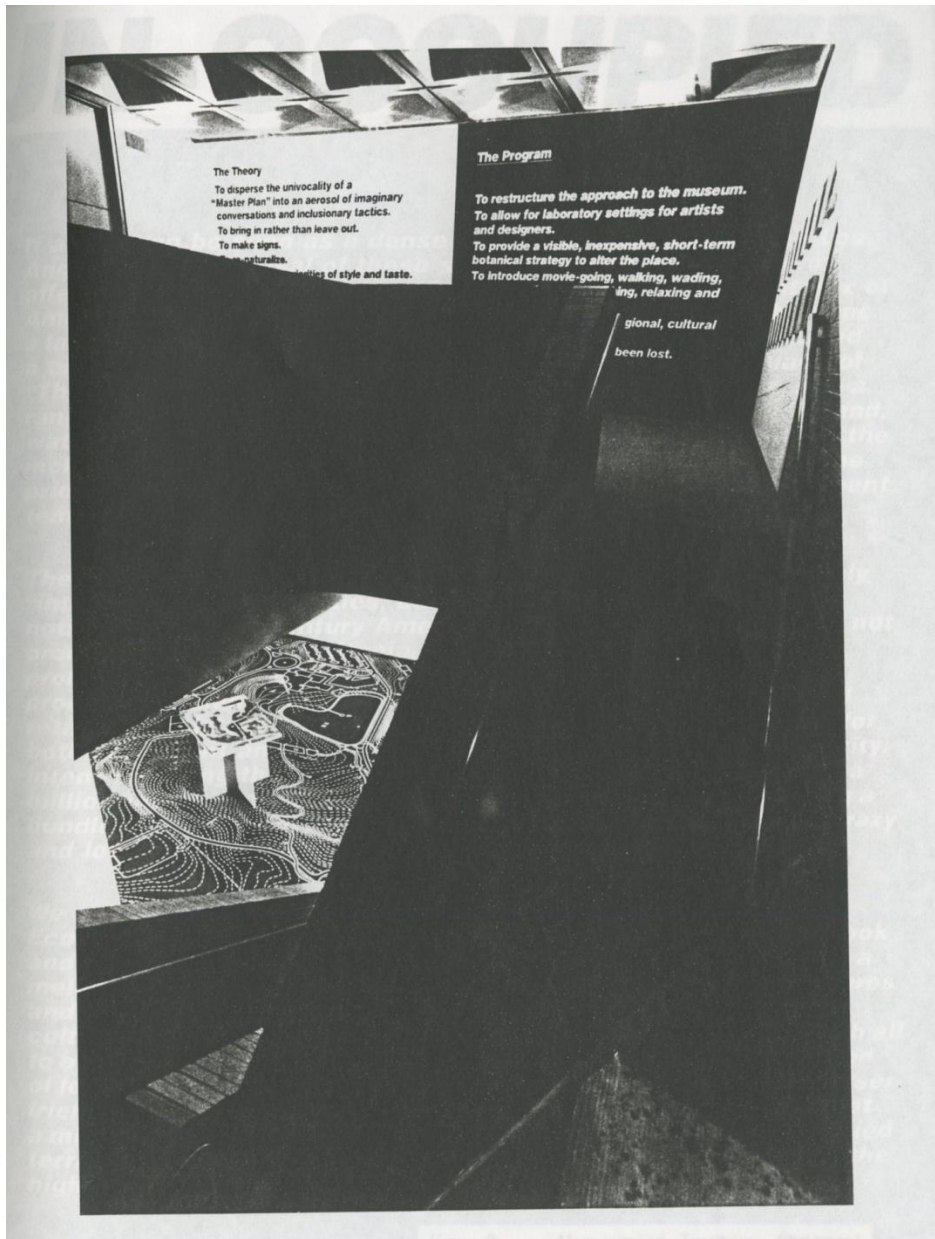


Figure 3: Photograph of NCMA *Imperfect Utopia* canceled exhibition, 1989 (Laurie Hawkinson et al., “Imperfect Utopia / Un-Occupied Territory,” *Assemblage*, 12).



Figure 4: Aerial photograph of *Picture This* from North Carolina Museum Art label inside glass elevator, East Building, Raleigh, circa 1997, (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ncma>).



Figure 5: Photograph of Kruger's letter "P" of *Picture This*, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author's photograph 2012).

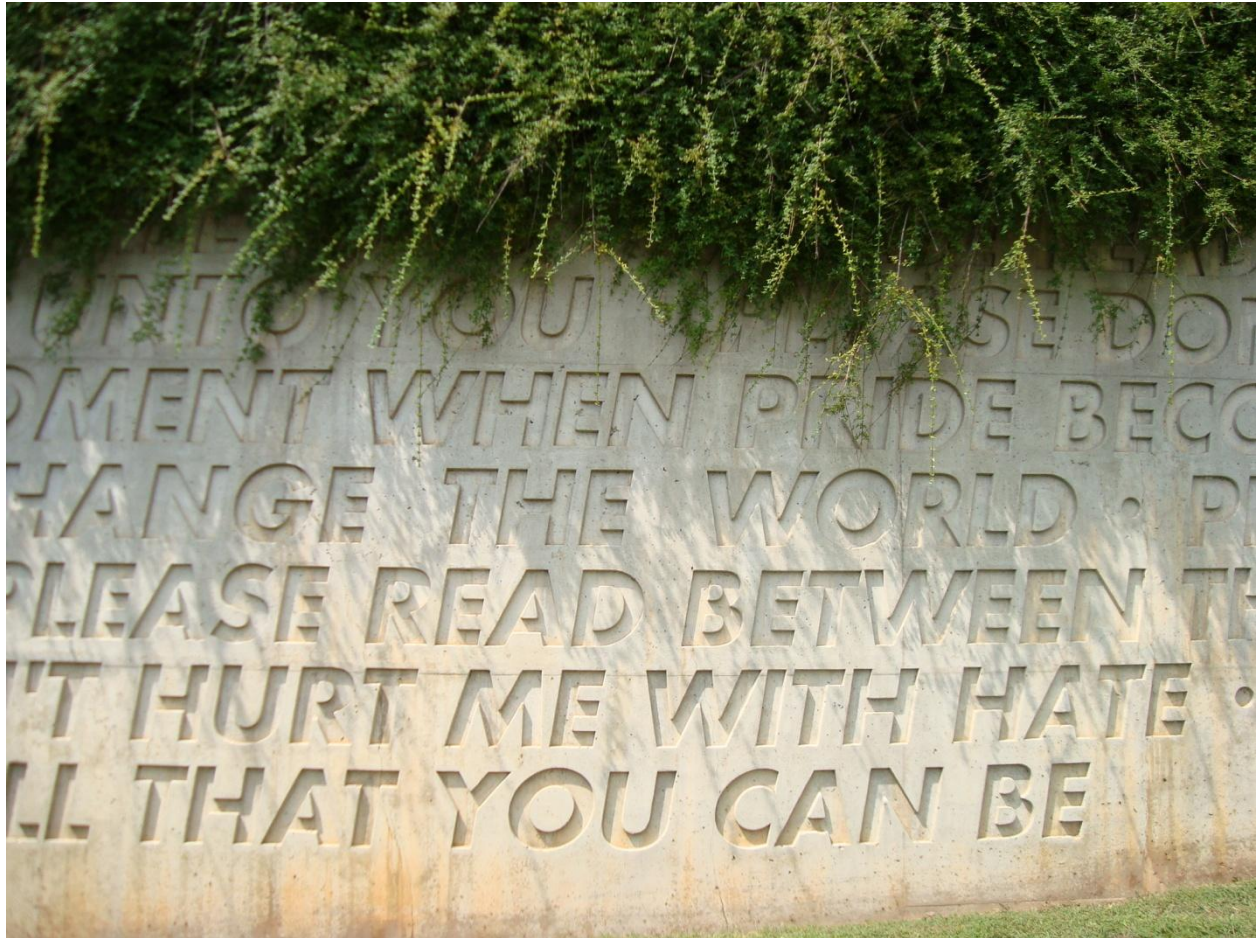


Figure 6: Closer detail of the letter “P” of *Picture This*, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author’s photograph, 2012).



Figure 7: Photograph of amphitheater and letters “P” and “I” of *Picture This* taken inside glass elevator, East Building, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author’s photograph 2012).



Figure 8: Photograph taken from the amphitheater showcasing the glass elevator and screen attached to the outside of the East building and the letters “I” and “C” of *Picture This*, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author’s photograph 2012).

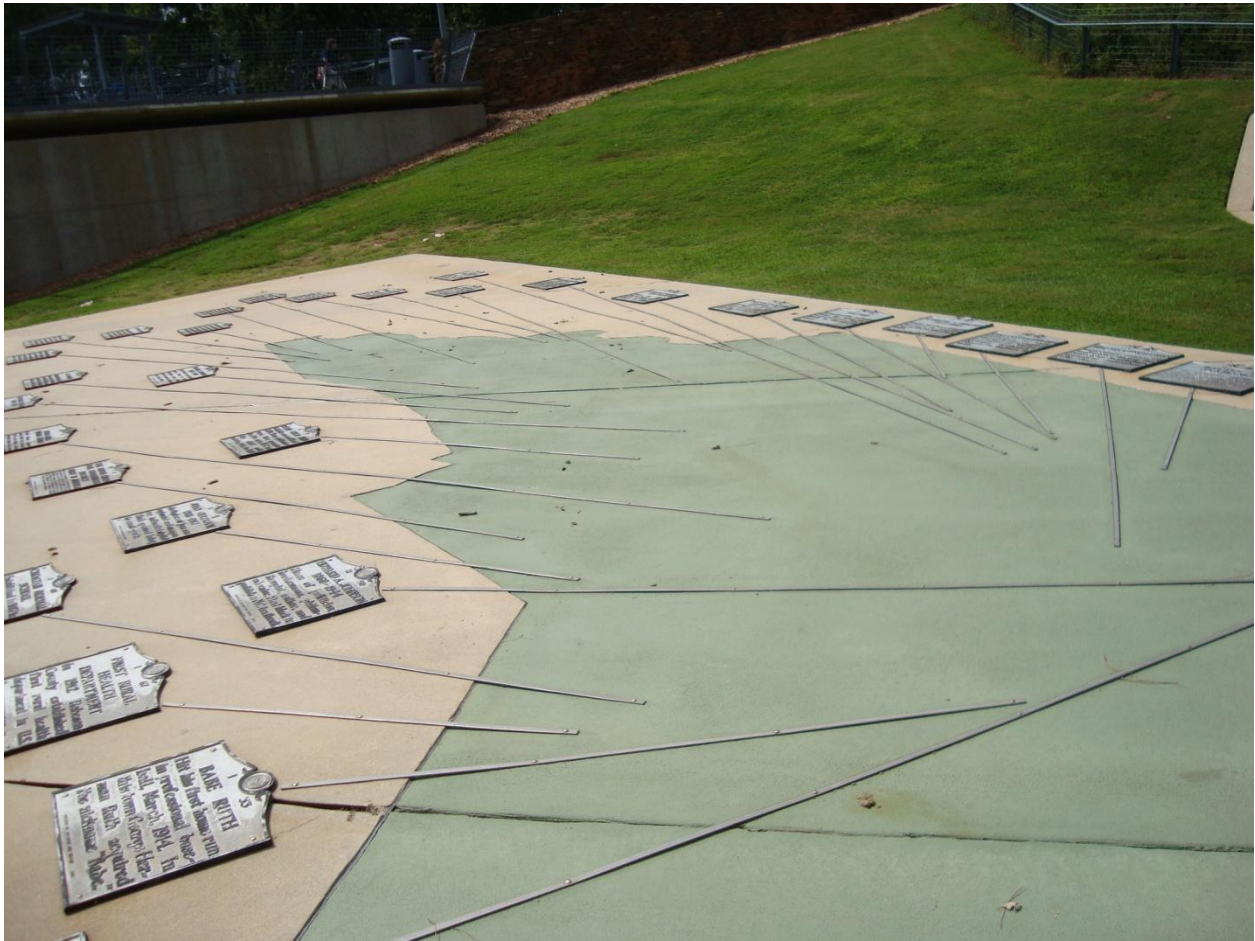


Figure 9: Closer detail of the letter “I” of *Picture This* featuring the outline of North Carolina and various historical markers, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author’s photograph 2012).



Figure 10: Photograph taken inside the glass elevator displaying the amphitheater and the letters “C,” “H,” “I,” and “S” of *Picture This*, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author’s photograph 2012).



Figure 11: Photograph of Kruger's letter "E" of *Picture This* featuring interconnected walls with quotations, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author's photograph 2012).



Figure 12: Photograph of the second letter “I” of *Picture This* featuring North Carolina’s state motto: “To be rather than to seem,” North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author’s photograph 2012).



Figure 13: Photograph taken from a hill overlooking the East Building; the letters “S,” “R,” and “E” are visible from the park trail, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (Author’s photograph 2012).



Figure 14: Current park map showcasing the West Building, extended park trails, loops, and outdoor art, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, (<http://www.ncartmuseum.org>).

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