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Empty Pedestals Project at Storefront for Art and Architecture

By Alastair Gordon

There is nothing so forlorn as a ruined monument. They are sadly neglected reminders of an earlier era; neo-classical plinths stripped of their original functions and covered with graffiti, Beaux-Arts style fountains once alive with dancing jets of water, now abandoned and filled with rotting garbage. The city has many such places and if, as a civilization, we are to be judged by the ruins we leave behind, then ours is a sad legacy.

A few years ago, artist Marc Blane became interested in the empty pedestals and defunct fountains of the New York parks system, and in an effort to recharge these public places on a symbolic level, he invited artists and architects to come up with proposals for recycling them. Four neglected monuments were chosen: the Crotona Park Fountain, in the Bronx; a pedestal in Brooklyn's Prospect Park that once held the bust of Edvard Grieg, the Norwegian composer; the empty pedestal of the Discus Thrower on Randall's Island; and Seward Park's Jacob H. Schiff Fountain on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Twenty-three of the proposals are on view at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, an alternative exhibition space that has served as a forum for innovative ideas in architecture and art since it opened, in 1982. Although not all of the ideas in this exhibition are to be taken seriously, they offer a fresh perspective on dealing with urban decay and renewal.



Jacob Schiff Fountain / Disappeared – Seward Park, Manhattan