

PARTIALLY BURIED PONTIAC

Andrew Wasserman

On the morning of Tuesday April 21, 1992, Themis Klotz stood in the driveway of her home in Glencoe, a northern suburb of Chicago. 1188 Carol Lane was a single-story wood and brick house on the western side of the tree-lined street cutting through the Glencoe Park District, nestled between the Glencoe Golf Club to the northwest, Turnbull Woods directly north, the Lake Shore Country Club to the northeast, and Lake Michigan to the east. In the 1980s, Glencoe appeared on movie screens as director and screenwriter John Hughes' prototypical American suburb. Overlooking Glencoe Beach, Ferris Bueller explained to his girlfriend Sloane Peterson that his now-catatonic best friend Cameron Frye might have blown a microchip or two. At Glencoe Union Church, recently sixteen-year-old Samantha Baker bemoaned participating in the wedding of her older sister, who may have taken muscle relaxers prior to the ceremony.¹

As though similarly out of a Hughes film, on that April morning the tranquil village was disrupted as a front loader, flatbed truck, dumpster, and team of workers descended upon Klotz's yard. Peter Cummins, rather than outraged at the noise disturbance, stood in the road watching the equipment navigate the winding road, likely relieved. A recent Glencoe resident, taking up his position as Village Manager only the summer before, Cummins inherited a problem property that provoked calls for village intervention for over a decade.²

The height of Klotz's lawn was an initial cause of consternation for her neighbors. Klotz proudly claimed that the property had not been mowed since 1980. However, the dumping ground Klotz started the following year and which would soon completely overtake her lawn demanded a more active intervention. Visible to passersby were rusted gas tanks, boilers, tin cans, and hubcaps, flowerpots, books, lawn furniture, cables, painted tires, a carton of ice cream, a broken shovel, and, most notably, a sand pile from under which the ends of a station wagon poked out. Two icons of the mid-century middle-class American dream anchored Klotz's arrangement: the well-manicured suburban lawn and the American automobile. The former had not simply gone to pot through abandonment but rather was purposefully corrupted through a stewing about of the stuff of contemporary American life, of which the latter was part. However, if Klotz's after-the-fact explanations are to be believed, there was method to her monument-making. As she defended in both the county court and the court of public opinion, this aggregation of domestic waste was an intentional public installation. This was a peace garden. This was a protest against the nuclear age. This was art. Maybe.

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Ferris Bueller's Day Off was released in movie theaters in the United States on June 11, 1986. *Sixteen Candles* was released in movie theaters in the United States on May 4, 1984.

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A block and a half away from Klotz's property, another neighborhood conflict was brewing. Cathie and Calixto Calderon replaced a two-story cottage home with a modernist steel and glass box. Their neighbors rejected the prefabricated structure as at odds with the local visual character. The Calderons soon found themselves aligned with their neighbors, and brought a lawsuit against their architect and contractor one year later, declaring the building a \$168,700 pile of uninhabitable junk. Brian Edwards, 'True stories', *Chicago Tribune*, 27 December 1991, pp. G3, G5 and David Silverman, 'House of the future' past hope', *Chicago Tribune*, 22 July 1992, p. S6.

This essay considers Klotz's project as subversive not only in the conditions of its creation but also in the circumstances of its removal. Although constructed on private property, Klotz's sculpture became a public matter. The lawsuit filed against Klotz by the village drew national attention, as freedom of artistic expression and political speech were weighed against local ordinances and the social contract governing participation in contemporary society.³ As her refusal to succumb to the incapacitating numbing of nuclear terror or participate in normalizing a social order, Klotz took not to the streets but to her own front yard.

Nuclear Chicago

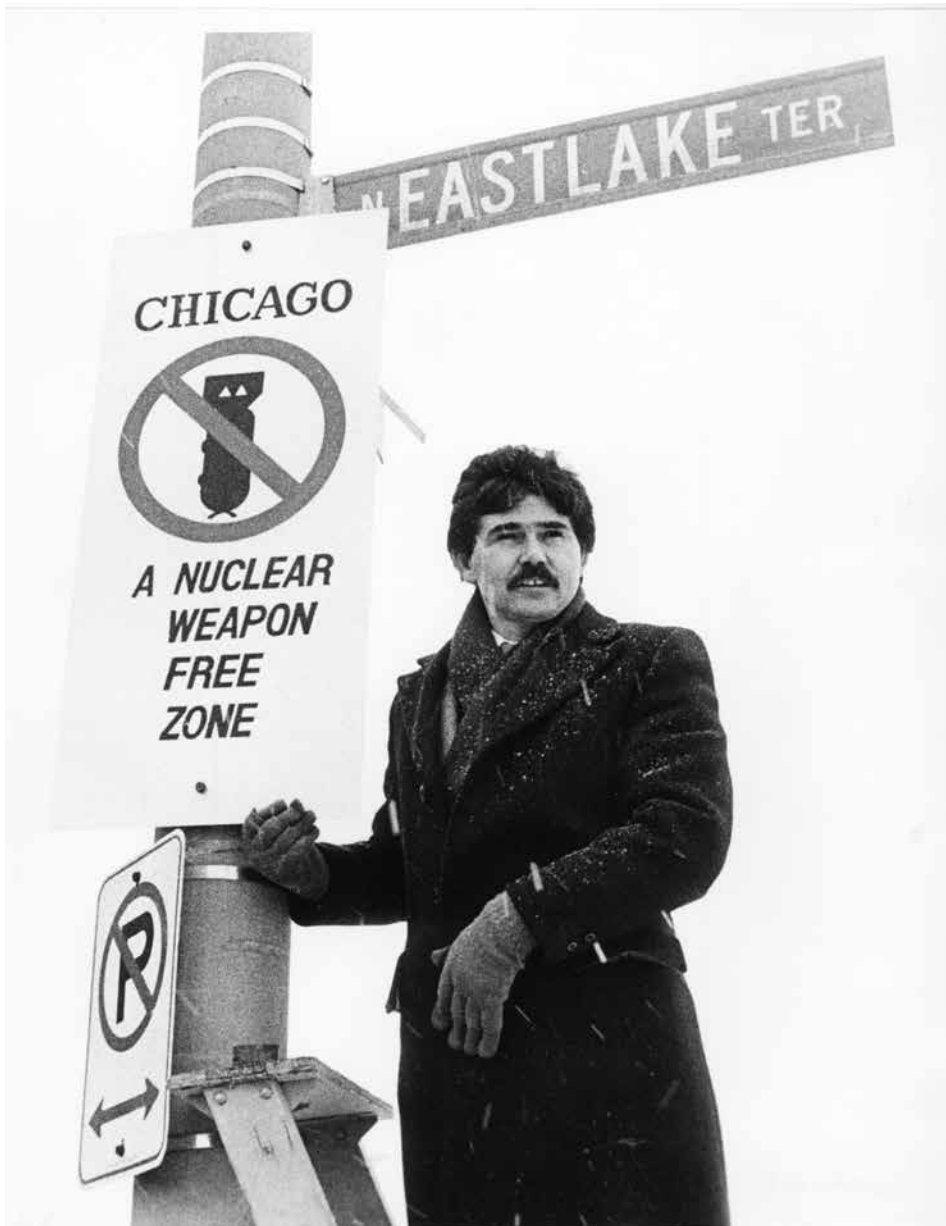
Public debate over Klotz's lawn arrived at the end of nearly a decade of public re-evaluations of Chicago's place in a national nuclear heritage. Chicago holds a significant place in atomic history. It was underneath Stagg Field at the University of Chicago's Metallurgical Laboratory that physicist Enrico Fermi conducted experiments that would result in the first self-sustaining fission reaction on December 2, 1942. In the decades since Fermi's experimental Chicago Pile-1, an enormous latticework tower of lumber, graphite, and uranium, went critical and effectively ushered in the dawn of the modern nuclear era, some residents rejected wearing the city's nuclear heritage as a badge of honor. After empirical demonstrations of the immeasurable capacity for purposeful human destruction through nuclear weaponry and escalating global tensions through an international nuclear arms race, the crisis of contemporary nuclear policy reframed Chicago's nuclear past.

While regional newspapers reported on the contaminated historical landscape's ongoing threats to residents, antinuclear demonstrations highlighted how *nuclear energy* and weapons policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations endangered human survival.⁴ In addition to targeting civic spaces, corporate headquarters, and government buildings, these protests also used as a rallying point Henry Moore's monumental bronze *Nuclear Energy* (1964-1966), the biomorphic sculpture vaguely suggestive of a human skull and mushroom cloud sited on ground-level above Fermi's subterranean test site. Public rallies with speeches, lantern lightings, graffiti protest actions, and mass die-ins capitalized on the symbolism of the marked site to capture media attention.⁵ An 'official' rejection of the city's nuclear legacy occurred in 1982 when Cook County passed a nuclear freeze referendum with seventy-five percent of Chicago voters casting ballots in favor of the non-binding pledge. Three-and-a-half years later, the city further committed to an antinuclear present and future when the City Council adopted a Nuclear Free Zone ordinance on March 22, 1986. The ordinance prohibited research, production, deployment, and

³ 'Law, Art and the Auto', *The Washington Post*, 23 November 1991, p. A26.

⁴ For example, see Casey Bukro, 'Illinois 'footprints' from the atomic age', *Chicago Tribune*, 29 October 1979, p. 10; Harold Henderson, 'Here Lies the World's First Nuke', *Chicago Reader*, 30 April 1987. Accessed through: <http://chicagoreader.com/chicago/here-lies-the-worlds-first-nuke/Content?oid=870570>; Laurie Goering, 'Radiation is found in old atom site', *Chicago Tribune*, 9 May 1990, p. 10; and Bob Secter, 'Picknickers, A-Bomb Waste Sharing Refuge in Illinois', *Los Angeles Times*, 24 June 1990, pp. A1, A21.

⁵ *Survival Summer News*, 5, Fall 1980, p. 2; *NBAU* [No Business As Usual] *Newsletter*, 2, April 1985, n.p.; 'Protestors pan the bomb', *Chicago Tribune*, 7 August 1985, p. 5; Lisa Hooker, 'Survivor's recount The Bomb's horror', *Chicago Tribune*, 8 August 1985, p. C2; Andrew Siegel, 'Chicago Declares "Nuclear Free Zone"', *Chicago Tribune*, 7 August 1986, p. A8; and Elizabeth Heneghan Ondaatje, *Trends in Anti-Nuclear Protests in the United States, 1984-1987*, Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1990, p. 35.



← fig. 1 David Orr with a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone sign, 1986, Rogers Park West Ridge Historical Society.

storage of nuclear materials within city limits. While not the first city in the United States to declare itself a Nuclear Free Zone, Chicago was the first with an active nuclear industry. The ordinance called for marking highway entrances to the city as well as City Hall itself with placards declaring Chicago “A Nuclear Weapon Free Zone” (fig. 1).⁶

Rather than jumping on the bandwagon of the revived antinuclear movement of the late 1970s and 1980s, Klotz’s interest in nuclear policy took root in the burgeoning peace movement after the Second World War. Born on Chicago’s north side, Klotz received a B.S. in 1946 and a M.S. in 1951, both in chemistry from Northwestern University. She spent the next decade co-authoring biochemistry publications with her then-husband Irving, who held dual appointments in the Department of Chemistry at Northwestern and the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and raising her two children Edward and Audie.⁷ A divorce followed soon after, as did her increased participation over the next several decades in citizens’ fora as part of the public review of proposed new energy and military construction projects.⁸

For her first sculptural gesture, Klotz rested a broken shovel handle against a tree in her yard.⁹ Rather than a refusal to discard a useless tool due to hoarding attachments, this action referenced a recent national announcement by Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering Thomas K. Jones. In 1981, Jones explained to Robert Scheer of the *Los Angeles Times*, that, in the event of an impending nuclear assault, “you can make very good sheltering by taking the doors off your house, digging a trench, stacking the doors about two deep over that, covering it with plastic so that rain water or something doesn’t screw up the glue in the door, then pile dirt over it.” Resolving mid-century concerns over residential competition for bomb sheltering — “If you’ve got a shelter and your neighbor’s got a gun, how’s this going to be handled?” — Jones continued, “if there are enough shovels to go around, everybody’s going to make it.”¹⁰ Taken literally, Jones encouraged citizens to disturb their tended lawns and flower beds, dig holes, mound dirt, and repurpose the stuff of domestic life as the urgent supplies of survival. Antinuclear activists vilified Jones for demonstrating the misguidedness if not

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The ordinance called for a two-year implementation period, during which time a “Peace Conversion Committee” would work to convert physical plants and resources and find alternative sources of employment for the over sixty personnel employed in nuclear weapons-related professions. Rob Calogeras, ‘Windy City Goes Nuclear-Free’, *Nuclear Times*, May/June 1986, p. 39. Unlike other recently-declared Nuclear Free Zones across the country, Chicago’s ordinance did not prohibit the transport of nuclear materials within city limits. The ordinance also did not constrain the actions of the federal government which oversaw such transport policies and funded nuclear research programs in the city.

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Irving M. Klotz and Themis Askounis, ‘Absorption Spectra and Tautomerism of Cyanuric Acid, Lemamine and Some Related Compounds’, *Journal of the American Chemical Society* 69:4 (April 1947), pp. 801-803; Irving M. Klotz, Jean M. Urquhart, Themis A. Klotz, and Janet Ayers, ‘Slow Intramolecular Changes in Copper Complexes of Serum Albumin. The Role of Neighboring Groups in Protein Reactions’, *Journal of the American Chemical Society* 77:7, 5 April 1955, pp. 1919-1925; Irving M. Klotz and Themis A. Klotz, ‘Oxygen-Carrying Proteins: A Comparison of the Oxygenation Reaction in Hemocyanin and Hemerythrin with That in Hemoglobin’, *Science* 121:3145, 8 April 1955, pp. 477-480; and Irving M. Klotz, Themis A. Klotz, and Harold A. Fiess, ‘The nature of the active site of hemerythrin’, *Archives of Biochemistry and Biophysics* 68:2 (June 1957), pp. 284-299.

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‘Cape Cod Planning and Economic Development Commission, Barnstable, Massachusetts, 18 August 1977’, Congressional Documents Online, Rutgers School of Law. Accessed through: http://njlw.rutgers.edu/collections/gdoc/hearings/7/78601262a/78601262a_2.pdf; U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, ‘Final Environmental Statement related to Primary Cooling System Chemical Decontamination at Dresden Nuclear Power Station, Unit No.1, Docket No. 50-10’, (October 1980), n.p.; U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, ‘Final Environmental Impact Statement on 10 CFR Part 61 ‘Licensing Requirements for Land Disposal of Radioactive Waste’ Appendices A-B’, (November 1982), pp. B182-183; and United States Department of Energy, ‘Final Environmental Impact Statement Superconducting Super Collider, Volume II Comment Resolution Document,’ (1988), p. IIA.2-206.

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David Silverman, ‘Glencoe vs. Klotz case a matter of lawn and order’, *Chicago Tribune*, 4 March 1992, p. D1.



Tribune photo by Bob Langer

Sand covers a 1966 station wagon at the Glencoe residence of Themis Klotz, who calls her front yard a "peace garden."

Glencoe yard art to owner, junk to others

← fig. 2 Page in *Chicago Tribune* with Themis Klotz's *The Monument to Humanity No One Will Be Left to Build After George Bush Has His Winnable Limited Protracted Nuclear War With 20 Million Americans Acceptable Loss*, 1982-1991, mixed media, dimensions variable, photograph by Bob Langer. David Silverman, 'Glencoe Yard Art to Owner, Junk to Others', *Chicago Tribune*, 1 November 1991.

outright futility of the administration's civil defense plans, e.g. how would this apply to those living in downtown urban centers or how could one dig into the frozen ground during a Midwestern winter.

Klotz was not alone in publically gesturing at the lunacy of such proposals. In May of 1982, the habit-wearing Marguerite Elliot and Sisters of Survival (Nancy Angelo, Jerri Allyn, Anne Gauldin, Cheri Gaulke, and Sue Maberry) created *Shovel Defense* (1982), a temporary public installation and performance. The artists erected a graveyard of shovels-cum-grave-marking crosspieces in four Los Angeles locations. However, rather than the prominent civic and educational sites of *Shovel Defense*, and without the backing of a citywide antinuclear culture festival that *Shovel Defense* had, Klotz created an antinuclear intervention from the objects of her own life on her privately-owned property in view of her neighborhood audience.¹¹

Klotz added to her public composition over the 1980s, eventually outlasting the Reagan administration. To mark the election of George H.W. Bush and his administration's continuation of hawkish military policies, Klotz parked her green 1966 Pontiac LeMans in her frontyard sometime between late 1988 and early 1989. She then had workers backfill forty-four tons of sand on top of the car. This transformed the vehicle into a structural armature for a complex sculptural arrangement, eventually consisting of orange emergency fencing, a roll of wire fencing, a desiccated tree, and a shirt. Buried in sand, the car still could be read as an extension of earlier civil defense proposals: a quasi-underground bunker under the oversight of its suburban owner. However, rather than making a historical reference, the title she eventually gave to the agglomeration after it began to draw local attention — and the title she and her legal counsel communicated to the press at the end of the decade — *The Monument to Humanity No One Will Be Left to Build After George Bush Has His Winnable Limited Protracted Nuclear War With 20 Million Americans Acceptable Loss*, served as a prophecy of the consequences of governmental refusal to seek full nuclear disarmament (fig. 2). The chaos of Klotz's lawn suggested a post-nuclear future necessitating premature monument construction. Those who actually survived the bomb — or bombs — would likely fail to engage in commemorative creation, their attention turned to more pressing matters.

Art Or/Of Junk

The question of whether Klotz's partially buried Pontiac constituted a work of art (Klotz valued the car-and-sand pile alone at \$5000), thus potentially exempting it and the property on which it rested from village ordinances governing vehicular abandonment, public health, and neighborhood beautification, was put before the Cook County Circuit Court in March 1992.¹² The trial case was heard in the Second District Courthouse

¹⁰ This interview became the impetus for Sheer's *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush and Nuclear War*, New York: Random House, 1982, pp. 18-19.

¹¹ The Southern California Alliance for Survival in collaboration with the Los Angeles Artists for Survival sponsored *Shovel Defense* as part of *Target L.A.*, a series of antinuclear exhibitions and cultural events in the summer of 1982. *Shovel Defense* was installed on May 10 in front of Los Angeles City Hall, on May 11 at El Camino College in Torrance, on May 17 at the Federal Building in Westwood, and on May 30 at the Social and Public Art Resource Center in Venice, California. Southern California Alliance for Survival, press release, 3 May 1982, Political Art Documentation/Distribution Archive (Anti-Nuke folder (2 of 7)), Museum of Modern Art Library, New York, NY.

¹² David Silverman, 'Art or Junk? Court to Decide', *Chicago Tribune*, 19 November 1991, p. S1.



← fig. 3 Mark Ruwedel, *Michael Heizer: Effigy Tumuli, 1983-1985*, 1992, gelatin silver print, 25.3 x 32.3 cm, Mark Ruwedel and Gallery Luisotti.

in Skokie, Illinois. Judge Margaret Frossard presided. Klotz's attorneys Joel Daly (whose credential as an anchorman for the Chicago ABC station affiliate's four o'clock news broadcast was cited often in press coverage of the case) and Burton Joseph squared off against Victor Filippini, Jr. and Thomas Woodrow. Witnesses for Glencoe included the fire chief and a vermin exterminator. Klotz's attorneys countered by calling as a witness Lynne Warren, curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, who would situate Klotz's unusual public installation in the history of difficult-to-read contemporary art practices.¹³

Warren defended Klotz's lawn as constituting a site-specific installation, drawing comparisons to mid-century Nouveau réalisme, the international network of artists which Julia Robinson has addressed as concerned with shattering the spectacle illusion of the contemporary world broadly and the contemporary art world more narrowly.¹⁴ Warren also cited a closer regional reference: Michael Heizer's *Effigy Tumuli* (1983-1985), the five shaped landforms — a catfish, frog, snake, turtle, and water strider — loosely evocative of Native American burial mounds Heizer constructed as part of a land reclamation commission across two hundred acres strip-mined by the Osage Coal Company.¹⁵ Although the mounds' animal references are visible only from an elevated position, Heizer intended the work to be viewed from ground level. Encouraging slow movement and study of the

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David Silverman, 'Yard Art Ruled Junk In Eyes of 6 Beholders', *Chicago Tribune*, 7 March 1992, p. N1.

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Julia Robinson (ed.), *New Realisms: 1957-1963: Object Strategies Between Readymade and Spectacle*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010.

¹⁵

David Silverman, 'Curator Says Yard's Art, But Pest Patrol Begg To Differ', *Chicago Tribune*, 6 March 1992, p: with N1 and George Papajohn, 'Scenes From The Alfresco Museum in 'Nouveau Realist' School of Art', *Chicago Tribune*, 8 March 1992, p. A1.

forms, the ‘art’ of the site is suggested rather than obviously revealed (fig. 3). Within a decade of completion, Heizer’s work was difficult to discern, with site erosion and questionable reclamation processes leading art historian Erika Doss to declare the project “a physical and public art disaster.”¹⁶

Animal forms were detectable in Klotz’s arrangement, giving rise to the defense that her project had an ecological dimension. Her legal counsel reported that she sculpted the sand into the shape of a whale.¹⁷ She drove a dead Christmas tree into one end and a rusting roll of wire to the other, representing the tail and the rounded nose of the creature respectively. While the scale of the arrangement would suggest this identification, it was more likely that Klotz had a dolphin in mind, emphasized by her draping of a t-shirt with a screen-printed graphic of a dolphin atop the pile.¹⁸ Regardless of the specific marine creature, this animal reading suggests consonance with period warnings about endangered marine biodiversity. Some of Klotz’s neighbors actually read the entire installation not as a protest of nuclear policy but of environmental disaster, with others attributing her purpose to a protest against air pollution.¹⁹

Rather than Heizer, a more direct (although likely unintended) precedent for Klotz’s work is Robert Smithson’s *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970) on the campus of Kent State University. Over the course of a week in January 1970, Smithson used a rented backhoe to pile load after load of earth onto the roof of a wood and stucco woodshed on the Ohio campus, stopping only once the structure’s center beam cracked. Smithson donated the work to the university’s School of Art, instructing that the shed was to be allowed to further degrade. It is tempting to link Smithson’s entropic work to the deteriorating political stability at the university, which would come to a head when National Guard members fatally shot four students on May 4, 1970. However, a clear connection between the work and these events has not fully established beyond Nancy Holt’s 1975 remark of the “intrinsically political” nature of the work and Suzaan Boettger’s more recent reading of the work as a “public monument to disorder.”²⁰

As a public object with its already-compromised utility further degraded through the staged displacement of earth, Klotz’s monument demonstrates a quasi-Smithson gesture. Visible cues of destruction signaled the ongoing breakdown of a productive world order, at the center of which was an American car. More than Ant Farm’s *Cadillac Ranch* (1974), a line of ten partially buried, skyward-pointing Cadillacs from 1948 to 1964 along Route 66 in Amarillo, Texas highlighting corporation-planned obsolescence, or Jim Reinders’ *Carhenge* (1987), a paternal memorial in the form of a semicircular arrangement of thirty-three partially buried,

¹⁶ Erika Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995, p. 117. See also Doss, ‘Public Art Chronicles: Michael Heizer’s *Effigy Tumuli*’, *Public Art Dialogue* 1:2 (September 2011), pp. 241-246.

¹⁷ Joel Daly, *The Daly News: A Life on Television News*, Chicago: Eckhartz Press, 2014. Accessed through: <https://books.google.com/books?id=xZpVDQAAQBAJ> on 21 June 2017.

¹⁸ David Silverman, ‘Art in the eye of its owner is lawsuit in eyes of village’, *Chicago Tribune*, 19 November 1991, pp. 1-2. The shirt was eventually stolen, prompting Klotz to file her own complaint with the village police department. Cynthia Mayer, ‘Object Dart: Suburb Targets Lawn Disornment as a Statement Saying ‘Junkyard’’, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, (14 March 1992), p. A1.

¹⁹ David Silverman, ‘Neighbors say nay to new house’, *Chicago Tribune*, 22 August 1991, p. 7.

²⁰ Holt quoted in Dorothy Shinn, ‘Robert Smithson’s *Partially Buried Woodshed*’, Kent State: Kent State University Art Gallery, 1990, p. 5 and Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, p. 200.

post-and-lintel-stacked, and spray-painted gray Cadillacs, Chevrolets, Dodges, and Fords outside of Alliance, Nebraska, Klotz's lawn composition transmutes an icon of American potential and freedom into an icon of American stagnation and encumbrance.²¹ A symbol of aspiration and self-determination has been literally buried. If Wolf Vostell's *Concrete Traffic* (1970), a 1957 Cadillac embedded within several tons of concrete, was a public sculpture in a public place, left in an active parking lot in downtown Chicago and subject to parking fees incurred during its months of installation (fig. 4), the ire provoked by Klotz's arrangement on her own property highlights the publicness of privately-owned spaces and places. In the legal challenges that followed, the territory of Klotz's lawn became a symbol for Klotz's creative autonomy.

Rather than parking it in her driveway, Klotz moved her car onto her front yard. One's front lawn, private property as it might be, is subject to public laws. A public ornament in private hands, the well-maintained yard, the "functionless carpet of green in front of a house," serves as the visual manifestation of one's participation in the social order.²² The open lawn links aesthetic management to communal management. This is the "tyranny of the front lawn."²³ Yet at the moment in which the front yard seemed to become "a place of dangerous vulnerability" as described by Fred E. Schroeder, no longer the nostalgically-inflected place of domestic protection but rather a site under threat by those assailants of the contemporary period feared to be flooding suburban enclaves from inner cities, Klotz configured her front yard as a warning of something even more threatening.²⁴ In creating a monument to disorder, Klotz sloughed off local standards of lawn maintenance to express dissent against national policies.

A Buried Resistance

Was Klotz creating a version of the post-industrial, post-nuclear picturesque? Or was she just a crank — *that* neighbor? After three days of testimony, a jury of six decided the latter. It found Klotz guilty of violating village health and fire codes. Her yard did not qualify for constitutional protections releasing it from these codes. Klotz was given three weeks to clear her yard before the village sent in a crew to do so. She was to create an inventory of the objects filling her lawn, report her plans to dispose of or store these objects, and, finally, clear and mow her lawn. While Klotz agreed to dispose of most of the legally-adjudicated-to-be-junk, she would not remove her car. Her proposal to pile more sand, fully masking her car from view, was rejected by the village.

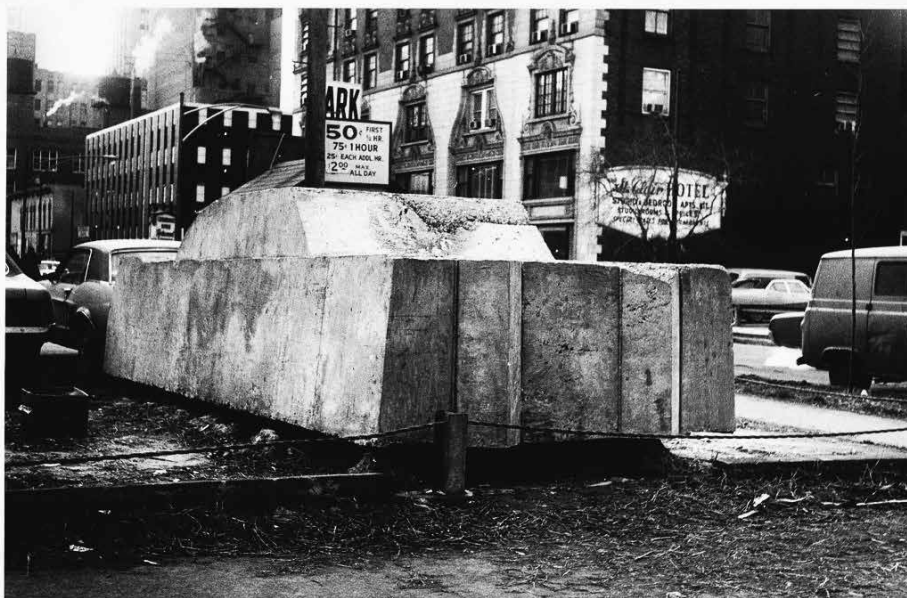
On April 21, the public nuisance that was Klotz's lawn came to an end. It was not a three-dimensional exploration into entropic processes. It was not a political statement with aesthetic dimensions. It was garbage, or more generously to Klotz, the court decided that the public threats posed by the purposeful creation of an environmental hazard trumped arguments declaiming the aesthetic value of and civic right to such creation.

²¹ Constance M. Lewallen and Steve Seid (eds), *Ant Farm, 1968-1978*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

²² Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 60.

²³ Sara Lowen, 'The Tyranny of the Lawn', *American Heritage* 42:5 (September 1991), pp. 44-48.

²⁴ Fred E.H. Schroeder, *Front Yard America: The Evolution and Meanings of a Vernacular Domestic Landscape*, Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993, p. 135.



← fig. 4 David Katzive, installation view of Wolf Vostell's *Concrete Traffic*, 1970, photograph by David Katzive, Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago Library and Archives. Courtesy of MCA Chicago and The Wolf Vostell Estate.

However, as a final defense issued by the work itself, the car split apart as the front loader attempted to dislodge it from place.²⁵ In destabilizing the eccentrically-ordered disorder, more destruction was wrought upon the landscape. Carting away the pile would not be a simple endeavor. Even under order of removal, its physical mass refused a quiet retreat. In the process, a seemingly haphazard accumulation as a monument to mass casualties was further transformed into a symbol of individual resistance through a spectacle of arduous destruction. In its attempt to physically unearth the car, the city exposed the difficulty of silencing its citizenry.

In the nuclear 1980s, dissent could be understood as undermining national programs of Cold War victory just as the poorly maintained lawn could be understood as undermining local beautification policies. Klotz's commitment to determine the appearance of her property, subject to accusations of the madness of the property owner, one who broke the binds of the social order, can instead be understood as Klotz's intentional commitment to signaling the irrationality of the age. As Joel Kovel argued in his 1983 analysis of nuclear terror, committing to the seemingly irrational, i.e. a more radical order, is one way of demonstrating moral integrity. One resists succumbing to technocratic systems of nuclear governance. What galls about nuclear weapons is not just that they will kill but the manner in which they will kill. It is "the wanton, omniscidal, future-destroying way" of nuclear annihilation, the twenty million dead in the fatalistic warning of Klotz's work's title.²⁶

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John Lucadamo, 'Cleanup Crews Have Final Word (You Guessed It) In Trash/Art Spat', *Chicago Tribune*, 22 April 1992, p. A8.

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Joel Kovel, *Against the State of Nuclear Terror*, Boston: South End Press, 1983, pp. 147, 159.

Today, international nuclear tensions are reignited and, in the United States, a new presidential administration seems to require daily citizen action to stave off erosion of social justice standards. Klotz's sculpture exposes the ways in which an individual can upend multiple scales of the social order by refusing to accept a state of imperiled security or compromised norms. Her willful destruction of her own property, her public stand on her privately held grounds, drew attention beyond her community. She waged a silent protest, made noisy by counter-protests voiced by her neighbors and local administrators and even noisier by the industrial clattering of the village's removal crew. To act and generate further action, to disrupt by causing additional disruptions, all the while drawing attention to the precarious hold any of us has over our rights as citizens: the legacy of and lessons to be derived from Klotz's lawn arrangement are in the efforts expended to remove it, the extents to which some will go to silence a single act of dissent.

There is an ease to burying one's head in the sand. Such refusals to engage generally do not draw attention. But perhaps the present requires a different kind of burial: a fleet of partially buried Pontiacs, front lawn after front lawn of rusting hulks, rejecting the degradation of national ideals, impossible to ignore.

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