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## BRONX

## Swiss artist turns Bronx housing project courtyard into an interactive, philosophical piece

The installation at the Forest Houses was dubbed the Gramsci Monument by artist Thomas Hirschhorn

BY DENIS SLATTERY / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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Residents of the Forest Houses in Morrisania are completing work on a massive art project called the Gramsci Monument.

A Swiss artist with a passion for philosophy has turned the courtyard of a Morrisania public housing project into massive interactive art installation dubbed the Gramsci Monument.

But the piece, designed by artist [Thomas Hirschhorn](#), is not a monument in the traditional sense.

The structure — made from plywood, plexiglass and plastic — rises from the courtyard between the red brick buildings of the Forest Houses like a wooden behemoth.

One passersby compared it to a giant tree fort.

"It's absolutely incredible," beamed Eric Farmer, the Forest Houses Tenant Association President. "It looks amazing and we are very excited to be a part of this project."

The structure includes ramps, large rooms, platforms and even a bridge to an outdoor lounge area.

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An overhead look at the massive art project produced by the Dia Art Foundation.

It's dedicated to the works of Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci.

And much like Gramsci's work, the piece is all about educating and involving the working class

The participatory project, which will serve as a de facto community center, classroom, and performance space, was completely built by residents of the Forest Houses.

"It's been beautiful," resident Janet Bethea said of her work on the project. "It's given everyone a real sense of community, a sense of pride. Not just those of us working together. Everyone in the neighborhood is behind this."

Professors and poets will give lectures and teach classes at the site throughout the summer.

Residents will work the radio station that broadcast daily from the site and local teens will perform theatrical works written just for the project.

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NYCHA Chairman John Rhea (left) with artist Thomas Hirschhorn (right).

The piece is the fourth in a series of temporary installations that Hirschhorn has built to pay tribute to philosophers such as Baruch Spinoza and Georges Bataille.

The politically-minded artist will be at the site all summer, his presence a part of the artwork.

"To me there is the idea of the non-exclusive audience," Hirschhorn said of the monument. "It's where people are living. That's why it's in this community."

Hirschhorn was able to complete the project with funding from the Dia Art Foundation, and approval from the city's Housing Authority.

NYCHA Chairman John Rhea applauded the project.

"Residents and visitors alike will be entertained, educated, and stimulated all summer by the Gramsci Monument," Rhea said of the piece.

The Gramsci Monument, Forest Houses, 949 Tinton Ave., July 1- September 15, 10a.m.-7p.m., daily.