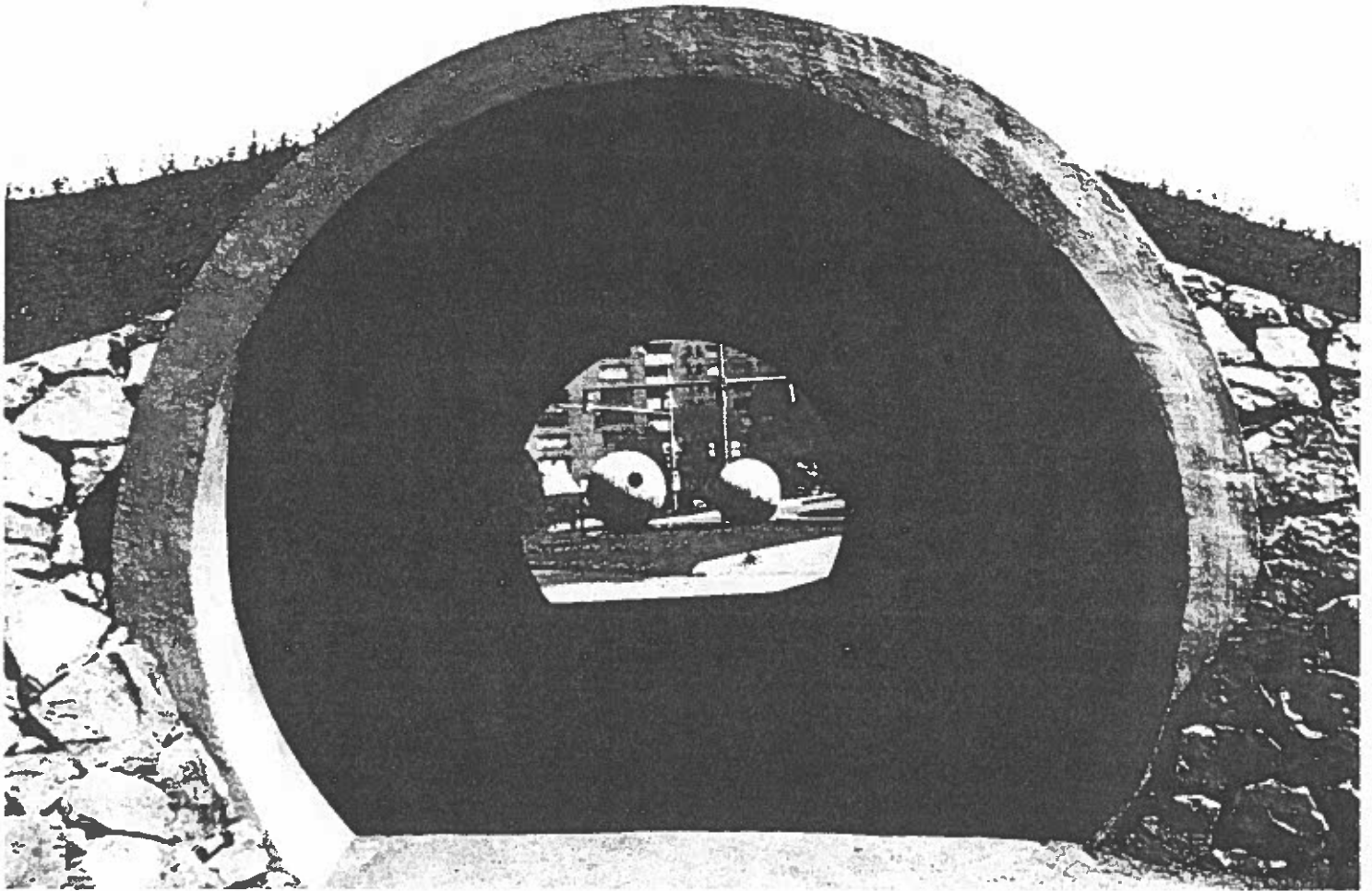
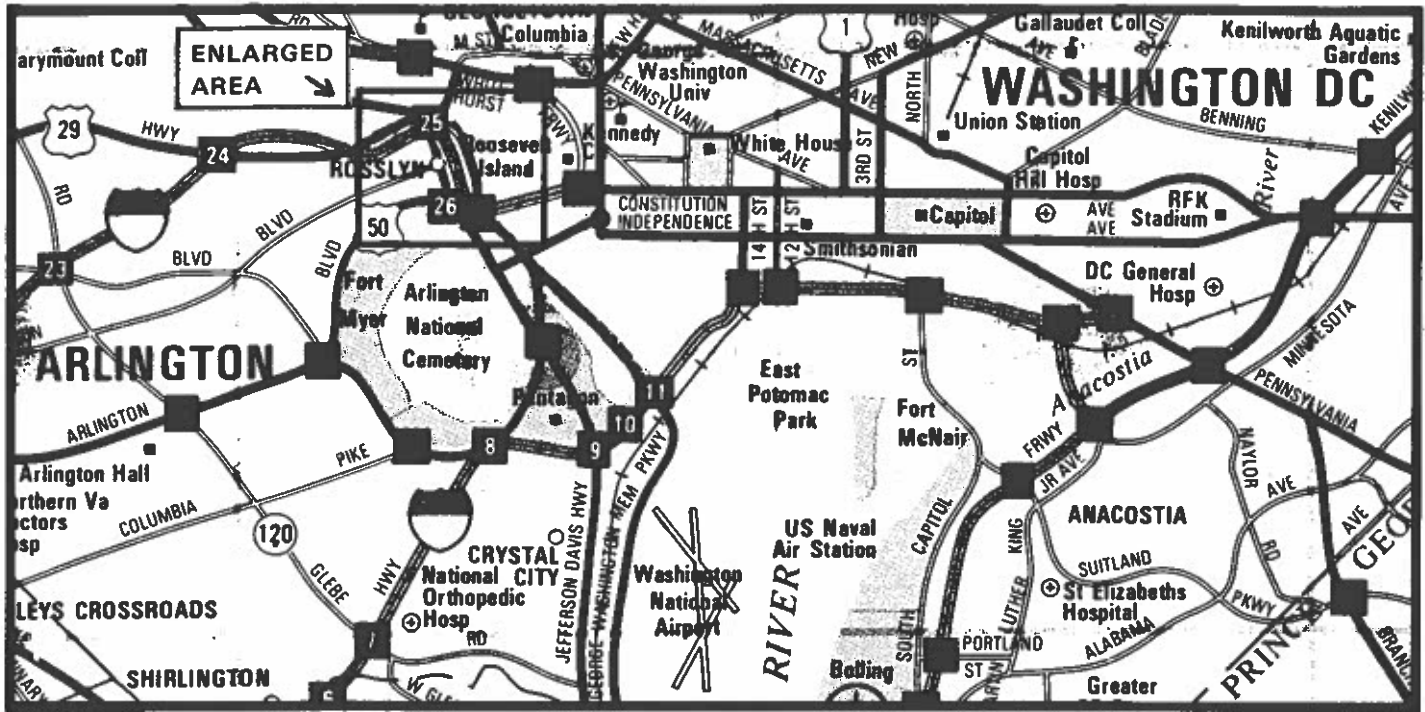


DARK STAR PARK

ROSSLYN, ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA



NANCY HOLT



DARK STAR PARK

1979 — 1984

Rosslyn, Arlington County, Virginia at the intersection of Fort Myer Drive and North Lynn St., 1½ blocks from the Rosslyn Metro Station.

Total Area: 29,000 sq. ft. (about two thirds of an acre)

Materials: gunite (air-placed concrete), earth, sod, winter creeper (*Euonymus Fortuei*), crown vetch (*Convallaria Majalis*), willow oak (*Quercus Phellos*), stone dust, stone masonry, asphalt, steel, water

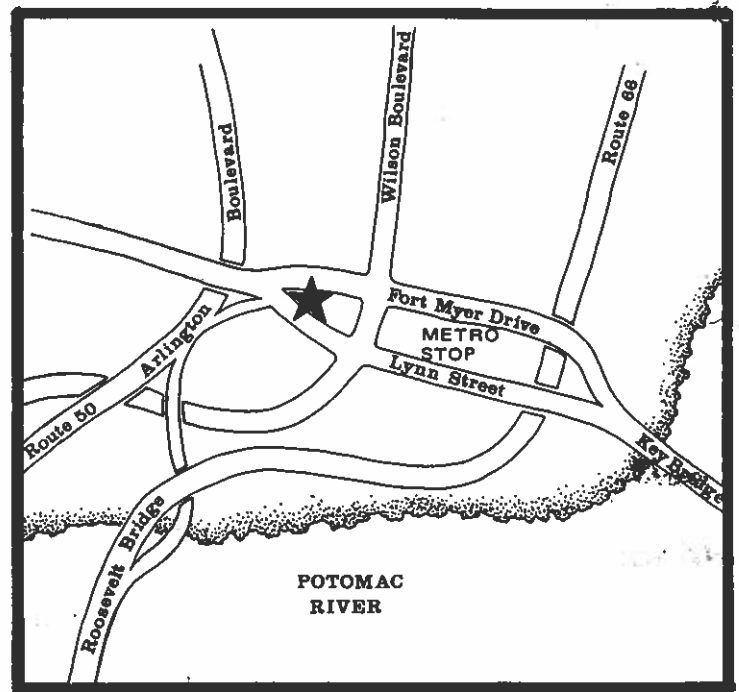
Dimensions of Elements:

	Diameters:	Lengths:
Spheres	(3) 8 ft.	
	(2) 6½ ft.	
Pools	18 ft.	
	15 ft.	
Tunnels	10 ft.	25 ft.
	3 ft.	15 ft.
Steel Pipes	6 in.	20 ft.
	6 in.	16 ft. 8 5/8 in.

Sun/Shadow Alignment: The shadows cast by the spheres and the poles will line up with the shadow patterns on the ground at 9:32 AM each year on August 1, the day William Henry Ross acquired the land that became Rosslyn.

Arlington County Administration:

Thomas Parker, Economic Development Chief
 Gary Kirkbride, Planning Section Supervisor
 David Pierce, Parks Department Landscape Architect

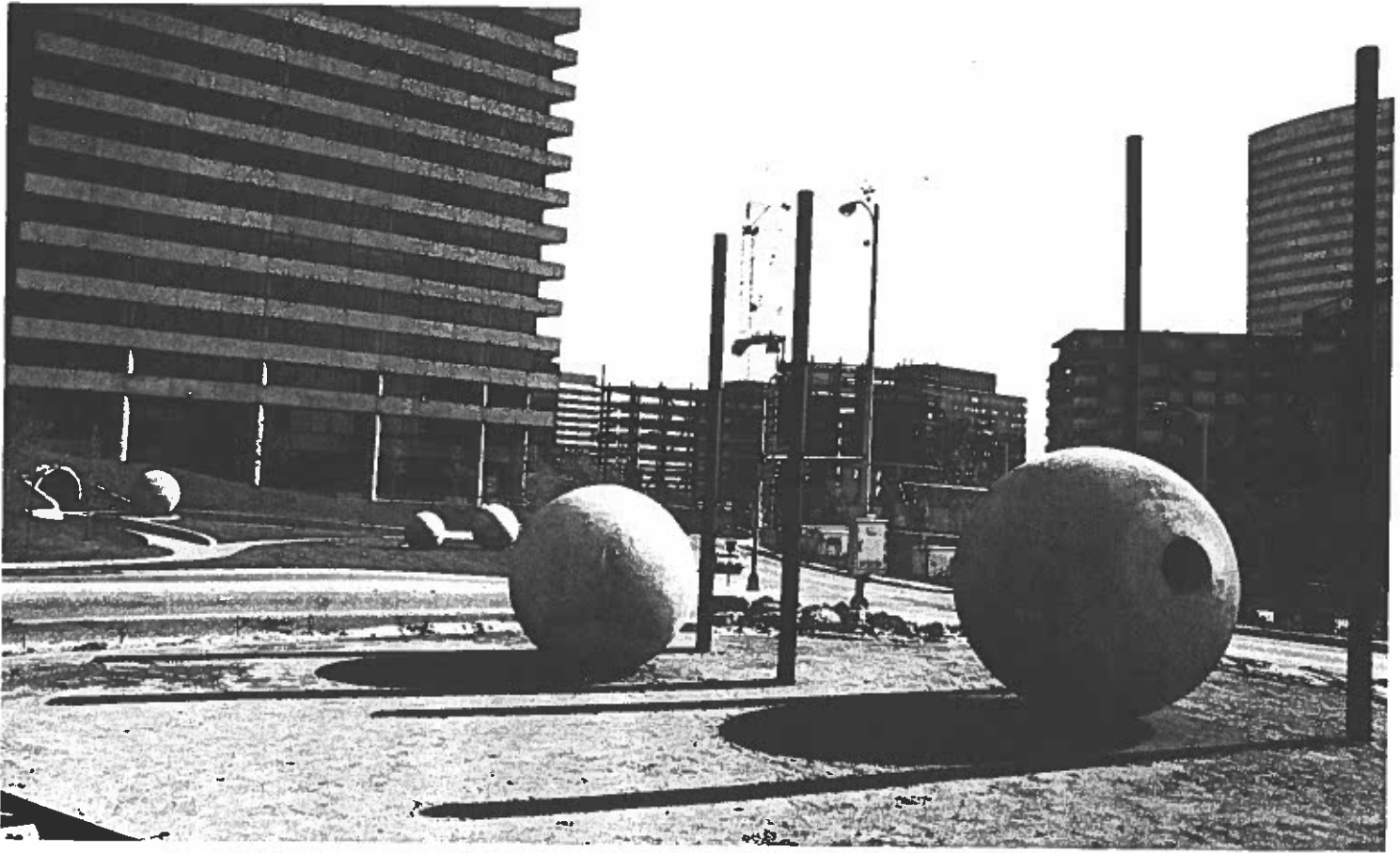


Contributors:

Arlington County gratefully acknowledges the support and financial contributions of the following organizations in the construction of Dark Star Park:

- National Endowment for the Arts
- Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
- Geneva Associates
- Theodore Gould
- The Kaempfer Company
- Marriott Corporation
- McDonald's Corporation
- Preston Construction Corporation
- Charles E. Smith Company
- Weissberg Development Corporation
- Westfield Realty Inc.

All photographs by Nancy Holt



Dark Star Park is significant both as a work of art and as the product of a creative alliance among local and federal agencies and the private sector. Just as Nancy Holt's design combines urban construction and natural patterns, linking the city and the sky, the project shows how government, business, philanthropy and the arts can collaborate to benefit us all.

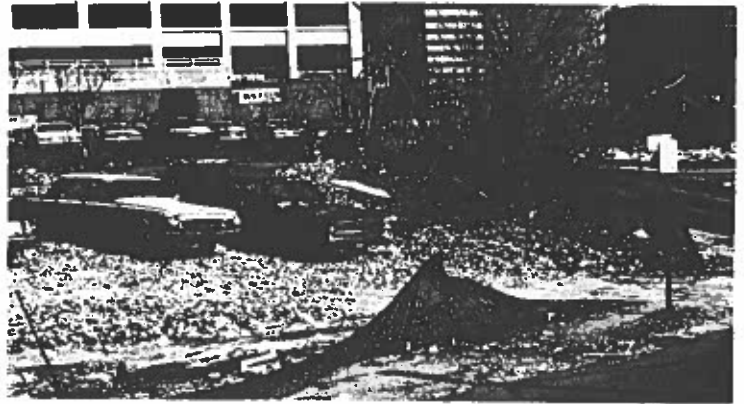
Planning for a park on this site, the southern gateway to Rosslyn, began in 1977 when developer Theodore Gould granted Arlington County a public easement over the property as part of the legal framework for his office building at 1300 North 17th Street. Later that year the County approached the National Endowment for the Arts and obtained an Art in Public Places Grant successfully matching funds raised through the generosity of the Rosslyn business community.

The artist selection panel composed of Arlington and National Endowment for the Arts representatives made the crucial creative decision to choose Nancy Holt as the artist and recommend that she be commissioned to design the entire park. The County concurred. The project's scope and impact were greatly enhanced when Joseph Kaempfer, developer of the property next to the park, agreed to merge the park's design with that of his Park Place office building and contributed a major sum toward construction of the park.

In dedicating this park, we recognize not only Mr. Gould's and Mr. Kaempfer's contributions, but also the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, and the Rosslyn business community. Thanks to the vision and commitment of so many individuals and groups, Dark Star Park is now a reality — and a fine example of how innovative, public-spirited investment can make an urban center more attractive and appealing as a place to to work and live.

Ellen M. Bozman

Ellen M. Bozman
Chairman, Arlington County Board



*The site of
Dark Star Park
in 1979*

Public art — whether in the form of sculpture, or murals or large-scale graphics, or landscape design — provides an open invitation to encounter the best in contemporary artistic expression. Such encounters provoke and challenge Americans to apprehend new dimensions of the life we all share, and enrich the visual climate of our society. Public art unites artistic vision with the public mind and spirit.

Frank Hodsoll

F.S.M. Hodsoll
Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts

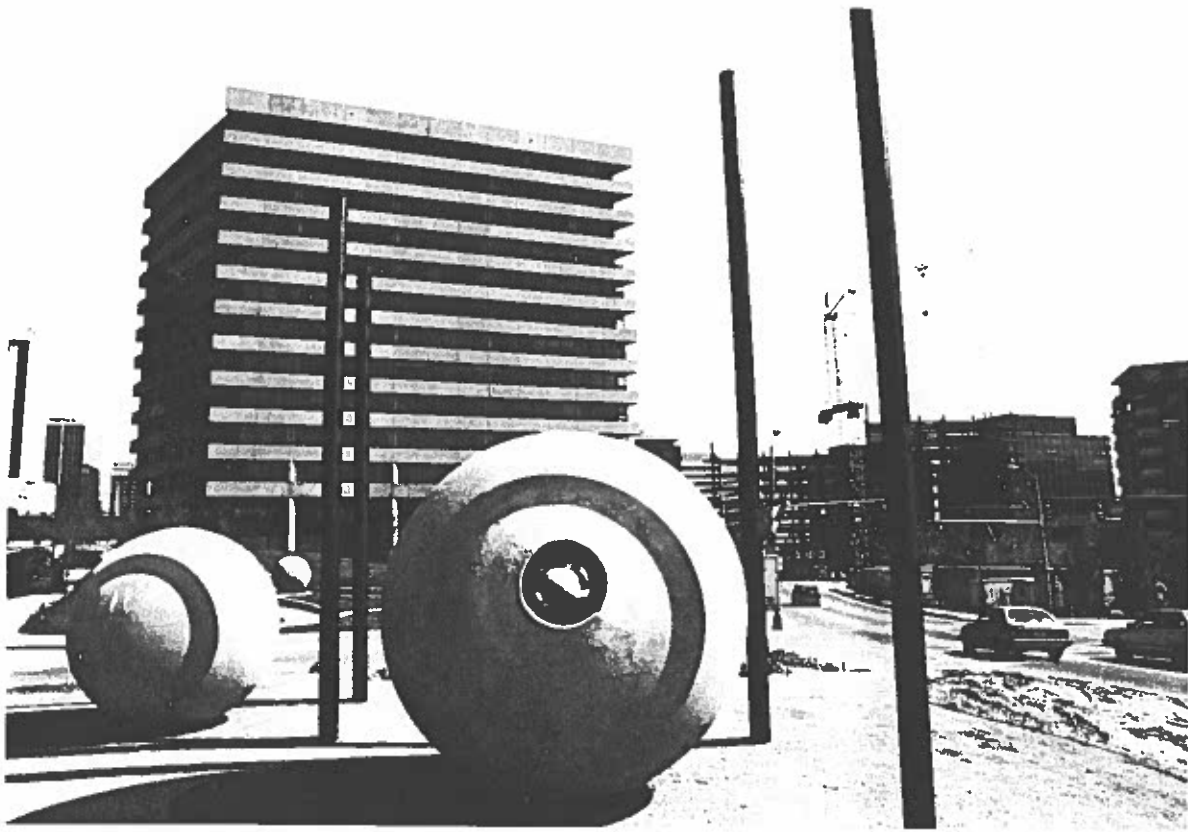
In an era sometimes known for its inflexibility and lack of creativity, it has been a joy working with the Arlington County government and others associated with the development of the Park Place Office Building and Dark Star Park.

Originally, the Park Place Office Building site was too small to be developed in an economical way. By using the imaginative approach of transferring development rights, the Kaempfer Company, with cooperation from Arlington County was able to justify the construction of the building. At about the same time, Dark Star Park was in the planning stage. In working with Arlington County and Nancy Holt, sculptor of Dark Star Park, we successfully merged two normally unrelated endeavors. The result is an addition to our environment which will, hopefully, inspire all those who share a moment here today and in the future.



J. W. Kaempfer, Jr.
President, the Kaempfer Company





Over five years ago, in the spring of 1979, I was informed by Thomas Parker, then Supervisor of the Arlington County Planning Section, that I had been selected to make a sculpture in a small park being planned in Rosslyn.

Soon after, I visited the proposed area — a blighted urban site with the buried remains of a gas station and a warehouse, surrounded by broken asphalt, giant weeds, collapsed fencing, fragments of glass, rusty steel, and decaying wood. Since the site was relatively small, my immediate thought was to use all of it to create a park that would be a work of art in itself. Fortunately, both Arlington County and the National Endowment for the Arts were open to this new approach to making art, and I was designated the park designer as well as the sculptor.

A few months after the contract was signed, plans to construct a building on the lot adjacent to the park were announced. Since the design of the building would obviously have an impact on the park, I was put on the committee to approve the architectural design. The first building plan presented would have cut off the view of the park from Rosslyn's main intersection and would have made the park into a front yard, since the entrance opened onto it. The second proposal, the Park Place building here now, resolves both these problems to everyone's satisfaction.

Once the building design was determined I was able to begin considering my ideas for the park. One of my strongest desires was to see the park flow into the plaza of the building and surround some of the columns. I contacted J.W. Kaempfer, Jr., the developer of the Park Place building, and told him of my idea. Since the concept was an unusual one there was some initial hesitation, but in 1980 at a meeting to discuss the issue, which included Kaempfer, Parker, Alex Jeffries, the architect, Peter Walker, the landscape architect for the building, and myself, the idea was accepted.

Simultaneously, I was seeking to extend the area of the park to include the traffic island, which is State land. The County was successful in obtaining permission from the State of Virginia, and the two pieces of land are now visually interconnected, parts of one park.

Park construction was postponed until the building could be built, allowing the park site to be used as a staging area for construction. In return, J.W. Kaempfer, Jr., graciously increased the park budget by \$50,000.

By the end of July, 1983 the park was underway. The gunite work was completed by mid December, 1983 by Paddock Pools and from

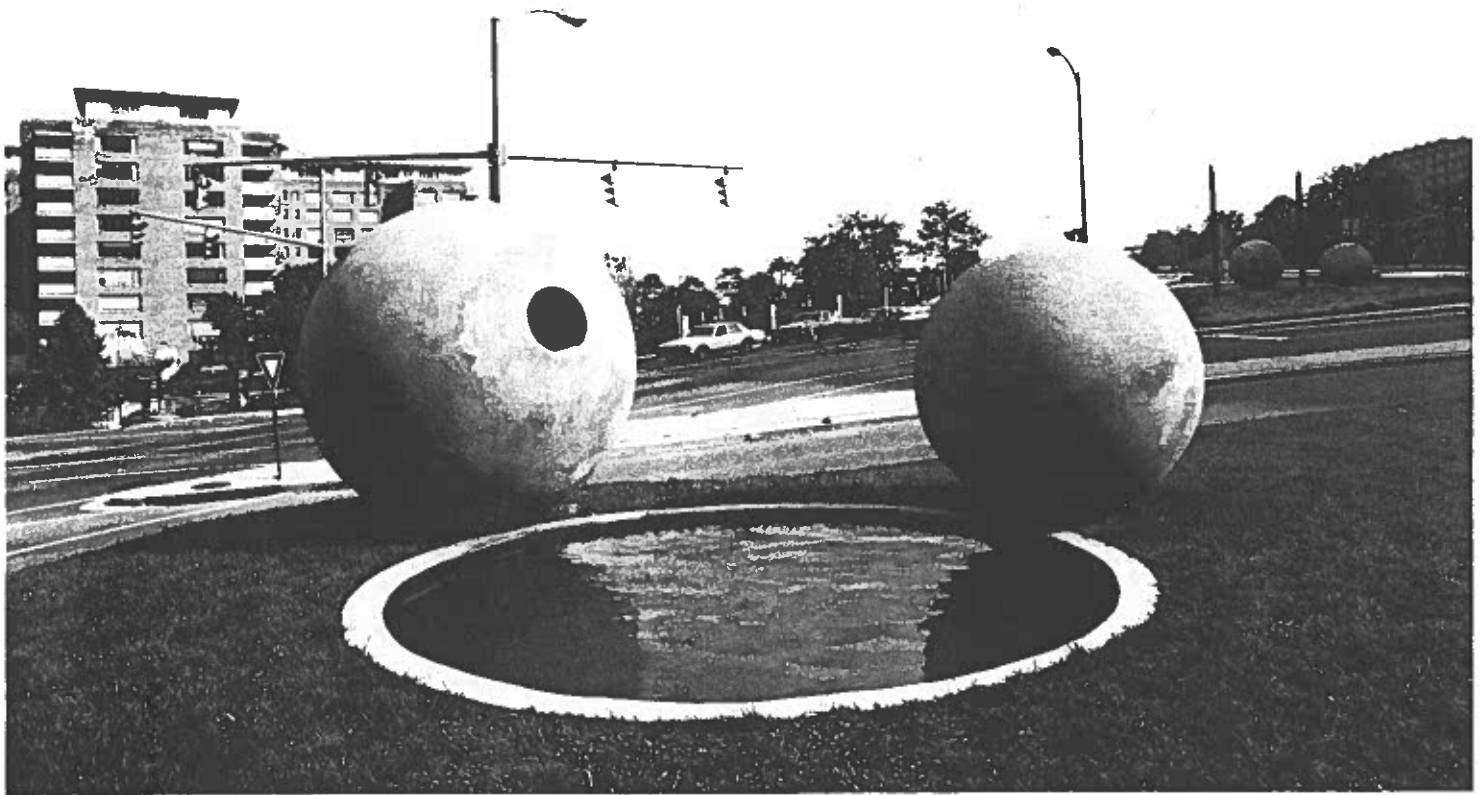
March to May, 1984, the park was landscaped. Throughout all of the construction I was present on a daily basis, becoming a temporary resident of Arlington in the process.

With Dark Star Park I am continuing, among other things, my concerns with the architectural form of the tunnel and its various symbolic ramifications — birth, death, transition, etc. and with illusions of ordinary perception, especially as perception is altered by curvilinear forms. As the viewer walks in the park or drives by it, spheres of different sizes may appear to be the same size, or one sphere may eclipse another in passing, or a sphere may be seen through a round hole in another sphere or through a tunnel or reflected in a pool. Two spheres are seen at the same time through the large tunnel and through the hole in the sphere on the island — in this instance, as the viewer steps back, one sphere slowly fills the circular void. When spheres are only partially seen through the holes, tunnels and pools, crescents and ellipses of space, sphere, shadow and reflection visually emerge.

The shadow patterns on the ground indicate that the poles and spheres are actually tangent to each other, whereas perceptually they look like they are either closer together or wider apart than the diameters of the spheres. The shadows cast by the poles and spheres line up with the asphalt shadow patterns on the ground at approximately 9:32 AM on August 1 each year, the day in 1860 that William Henry Ross acquired the land that became Rosslyn, merging historical time with the cyclical time of the sun.

The making of Dark Star Park has been long and arduous. I became involved in areas of activity in which I had had limited experience, such as architectural planning, landscape design, contractors specifications, engineering, guniting, drainage, sidewalk construction, bureaucratic procedures, etc. Five years is a long time to sustain an art idea and work toward its realization. But during that time possibilities for other works have been evolving out of the intermediate stages, and my concern with the value of making art that is also functional and necessary in society has been reinforced. I hope the precedents established here will continue in future art projects throughout the world.

Nancy Holt
Nancy Holt
Artist



Excerpts from "A Park Grows in Rosslyn: Spheres and Tunnels in a Strong Design" *The Washington Post*, Saturday, September 17, 1983

...The idea of commissioning an artist to design an urban park, to control the entire spatial experience and not just to add a sculptural touch, is worth careful study on the part of politicians and planning commissions in other cities.

It is a good idea and a bold one, but should not be lightly entertained. A key to success — *the* key, perhaps — is selecting an artist who is up to the job. Most are not. Designing a park entails attention to functional and practical requirements that most artists, by temperament and training, are not equipped to deal with.

On the other hand, the right visual artist can bring a fresh perception and a holistic vision to the enterprise. Isamu Noguchi is such an artist. So is Holt...who for more than a decade has been making sculpture that responds, often in strange, surprising ways, to the physical and psychological conditions of specific sites.

She was inspired by the isolation and dome-like sky of a desert in Utah, for instance, to place huge concrete conduits there, conduits with holes bored in them so that the burning sun would record the daily passage of the Earth upon their shadowy interior surfaces. In a green Dublin park she mimicked existing irrigation systems to create an airy, fanciful structure out of silvery water pipes. In Oxford, Ohio, on a sweeping lawn near ancient Indian mounds, she buried pipes in a mound-like structure that aligns itself with the magnetic North Pole.

Holt's park in Rosslyn...also involves measurement, with the difference that the site lines direct the eye towards specific aspects of the park itself. ...Five spheres are placed at key locations in the park. Holes bored in the center of two of the spheres and two see-through tunnels buried in the undulating earth will focus attention upon the

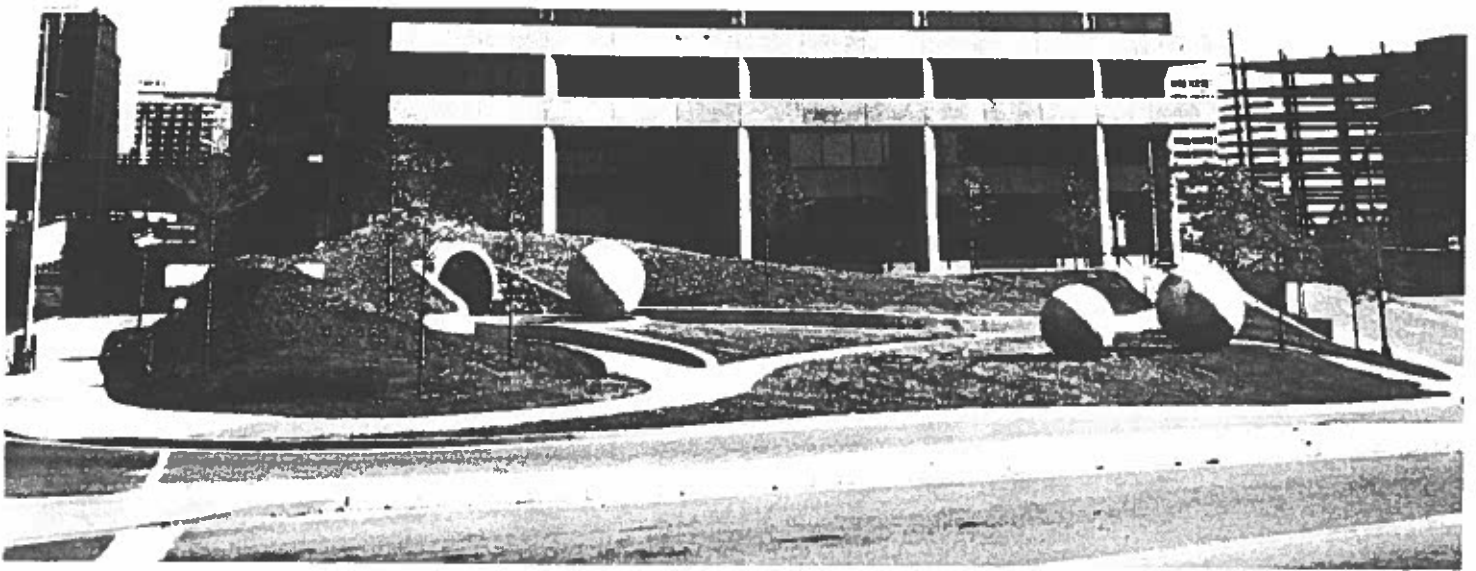
relationships between these forms. (Holt, characteristically, refers to these relationships in celestial terms. "There will be eclipses," she says.)

Another of Holt's strategies is a sort of studied contrast between natural and man-made forms, and between hard and soft materials. She chose a gunite surface for the spheres, she says, because concrete was the "natural material" for Rosslyn. ...Gunite is a dry mixture of Portland cement and sand that is driven by air pressure through a tube and moistened at the nozzle end as it is sprayed on. For Holt's purposes it was the ideal material — extremely durable and yet flexible. Mark Wilkinson of Paddock Pools, the gunite contractor for the park, contrived an ingenious method of spraying the gunite over styrofoam molds reinforced with steel rods and chicken wire, and he invented an odd-looking, but effective, circular screed to smooth the uneven surfaces after spraying.

...The lightly textured surfaces (of the spheres) have a lunar-like quality that should give the park an intense, almost apparitional appearance. At the same time, Holt provided the right practical elements, places to sit and eat and schmoose, so that the park will be a commodious, as well as a contemplative, place to visit. ...Holt's strong, strange park will, I think, age gracefully and well.

Benjamin Forgey

Benjamin Forgey — Art/Architecture Critic



Little more than two years ago, I wrote that the history of contemporary public sculpture was too short for paradigms. Few of the numerous artworks that had come into being through the various federal, state, and local public art and percent for art programs seemed to combine high artistic standards with a significant measure of truly public purpose or character. There had been too few, at least, to safely predict that this could and would be the norm. An exact formula for successful public art projects eluded me then, as it still does. But I suggested that some narrative or symbolic content or some purposeful — utilitarian — intent could transform contemporary art in public places, often awkward in its unfamiliar new home, into an acceptable contemporary form of public art. I was optimistic that among the artworks then under consideration, some paradigms might appear.

Nancy Holt's project for Arlington County was one that I singled out for its potential. Selected because of her talents as an environmental artist, Holt was given the difficult charge of creating a small park that would also be a large sculpture. From the outset, her project was instructive. She presented her past work and her proposals for the park at public meetings and worked with county planning officials, engineers, and landscape architects on the plans for the site. She demonstrated that art could emerge as an element of intelligent public planning and that artists could work with other professionals as part of a creative team.

Yet it is in the completed artwork itself that Holt's project has most handsomely rewarded my optimism. Holt has molded earth behind serpentine walls and floated elegant spheres over pools of water. She has disposed these sculptural elements in a series of intriguing formal relationships and intensified our perception of shifting alignments by the use of sight lines through the earthen berm and some of the spheres. The combination of monumentality and deftness makes this Holt's best and most ambitious work since the completion of her majestic *Sun Tunnels* in the Utah desert in 1976. Holt has also provided us with a model for excellence in public art projects. Her work is fully public: in purpose, in access, and in the process by which it came to be. Yet it is also her own, a work that fully reflects the sensibilities of its creator. We want only for more paradigms of this kind in contemporary public art.

John Beardsley
 John Beardsley, Art Critic



Bottom photograph shows construction of a gunite sphere using the semi-circular screed

