

ARTS

MAGAZINE

NOV 1991

USA \$4.75

CANADA \$5.25

AUSTRALIA \$A 7.50

FRANCE FF 60

GERMANY DM 15

ITALY L 12,000

NETHERLANDS HFL 14.90

SWITZERLAND SF 15

UK L 3.75

SPAIN Ptas 1200

NEW YORK IN REVIEW

One of the most interesting and successful outdoor works is a piece entitled *Liberty Prop (pavilion)* by **Jeffrey Cole** and **David Schafer**. Its success is due, in part, to the deliberate relationship between choice of location and the specificity of the form and the subject matter of the sculpture. The work is placed directly between the sidewalk and the site within City Hall Park, which documents the location of the first such poles erected by the Sons of Liberty in defiance of the British. In its configuration the piece mimics the commemorative pole. Billboards of enlarged, cropped images of the American flag hang from the central flagstaff. Each



David Schafer, Jeffrey Cole, *Liberty Prop*, City Hall Park, 1991, Painted steel, wood, aluminum, galvanized cable, vinyl letters.

of the four images is superimposed both with symbols of ownership/protection (a trademark, copyright, patent code, etc.) and upper- and lower-case graphics of the first four letters of the alphabet. On the inside surfaces of the billboards Cole and Schafer reproduce pages from a textbook on the Constitution. With headings like WORDS YOU NEED TO KNOW, the boards function like giant flash cards, symbolizing the systems, patterns, and rote memorization that plays so great a part in American education, where the kind of questioning and rebellion that the original Liberty Poles represented is hardly encouraged and rarely tolerated. Some of the material outlined illustrates an oversimplification of political and legal terms that are not easily defined. Democracy is proffered as being "a country where the people govern themselves"; treason, "making war against the United States or helping its enemy," both of which propagates an "us-versus-them" mentality and reveals a megalomaniacal tendency through pervasive self-reference. Oath is defined as being a "sacred promise," negating the possibility for reconsideration and disallowing the secular in matters of civil evaluation and commitment. The issues of a prescribed perspective and property protection (born of ownership) as regards the nature of American democracy are and echoed by a long picket fence and a wooden slatted path, both of which lead the viewer to a half-crescent-shaped metal footbridge placed under the shelter of the billboards. The bridge, though physical, is an illusion as it does not lead anywhere and ends in a point. The invitation to enter and examine the work and its issues is abbreviated—the path it offers is a closed one.

Gretchen Faust