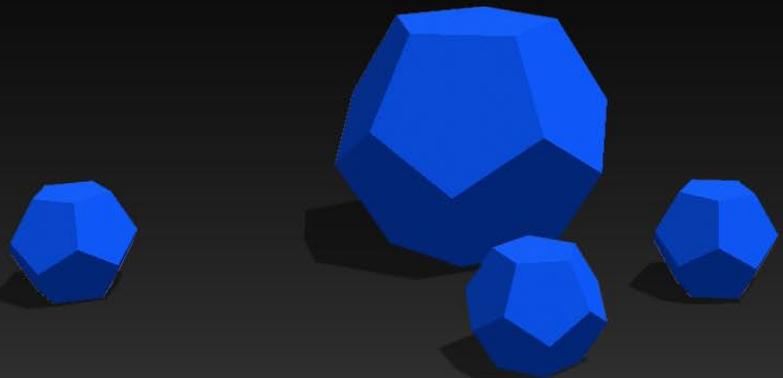


# Geometric Public Awareness

Public Art Proposal  
Dan Sternof Beyer  
2010



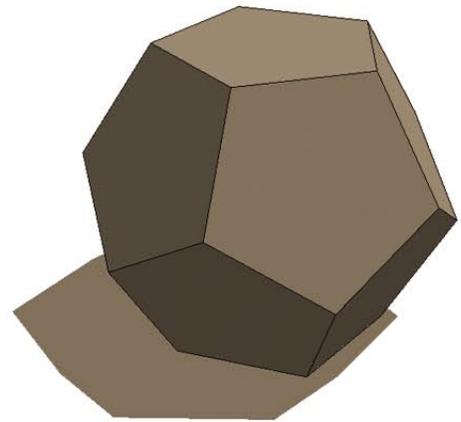
## Selected History\*

The dodecahedron is the fifth platonic solid, which to the Greek Pythagoreans represented the entire universe. When knowledge of the other 4 platonic solids was made public, the dodecahedron was kept secret. The square root of 2 was also kept from the public because it is irrational (it cannot be expressed by the ratio of two integers). It is possible to discover irrationality when constructing a dodecahedron, as seen through infinite reciprocal subtraction in the Golden ratio of the regular pentagon face.

Believing that the world was ruled by math and that all numbers could be described by a ratio of integers, the Pythagoreans regarded this knowledge as both sacred and dangerous. It challenged their ideals and power and so it was kept secret from the public.

Thus historically, the dodecahedron represents the hidden knowledge of the elite class.

Hippasus of Metapontum was a Pythagorean who revealed the knowledge of the dodecahedron and irrational numbers to the public. It is said that he showed to the public a dodecahedron inscribed in a sphere. This act of was enough to warrant his death, and he was drowned.



The regular dodecahedron.

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\* Selected History. There are no modern accounts of these events that do not caveat themselves stating, "the records are few and contradict." As we know, history is written by the winners of wars, re-written by the powerful of the time, and interpreted in various ways for various purposes. To say, without question, that a certain order of events occurred is an act of social agreement and thus factual in as far as the agreement of the society. The past is enigmatic. Its recollection and record is a creative act of imagination undertaken by a society. I would go so far as to say, that history is an interactive work of public art.

# Protected Knowledge

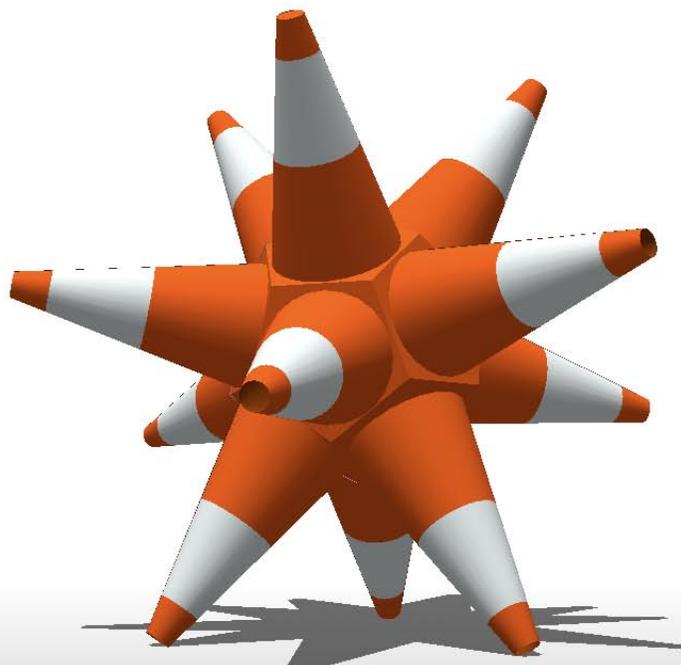
12 traffic cones are attached to each of the 12 faces of a dodecahedron and internally structurally supported, forming a freestanding, stellated dodecahedron. To surround the dodecahedron with traffic cones relates that hidden knowledge is dangerous and is kept from the common citizen for his or her own safety.

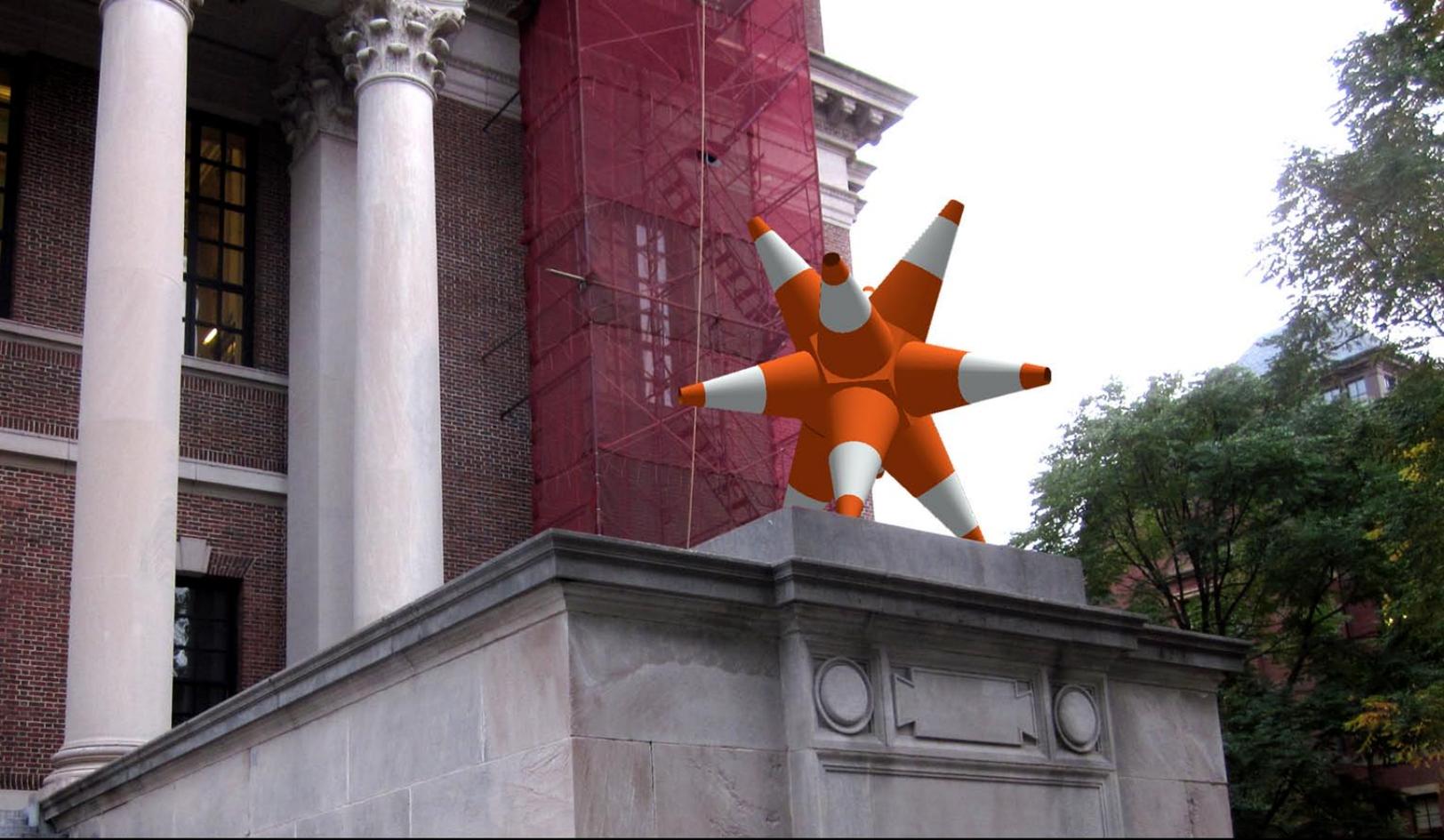
The placement of this work is intended for the entryway of a university, governmental, or financial building. In this way examining the roles that these institutions play in disseminating knowledge to the public. By choosing the common traffic cone as a material and metaphorical device the sculpture is both familiar and foreign, describable yet bizarre.

On the following pages optional placements outside of Harvard's Widener Library and Carpenter Center are shown. Both sites are undergoing or near construction, which gives the work a familiar context.

The work is constructed to tolerate public interaction with it, including shaking and rolling it around. Such interaction is encouraged. Even a total destruction of the sculpture by the people is not out of the question as such action, in consideration of the sculptures underlying meaning, would mean revolution.

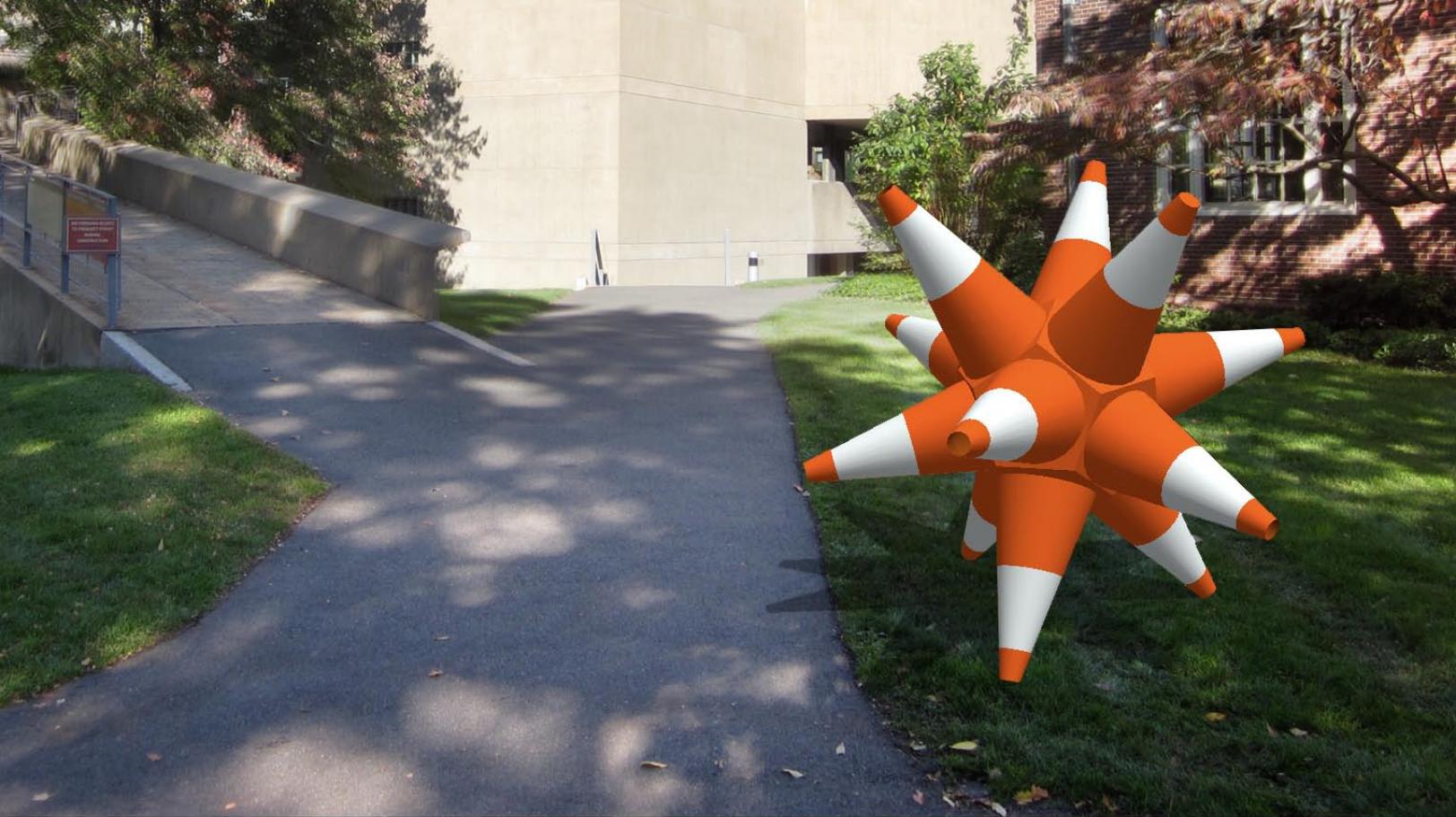
5' 6"





Widener Library - Harvard Campus  
West end of steps, near construction.





Carpenter Center - Harvard Campus  
West ramp entrance



# Public Knowledge

This work is placed in the public venues of the common citizen. This is a symbolic way of giving the once hidden elite knowledge to the people, for their own examination and interpretation. The work is not fixed to its position and thus gives the public the ability to move and re-arrange its formations.

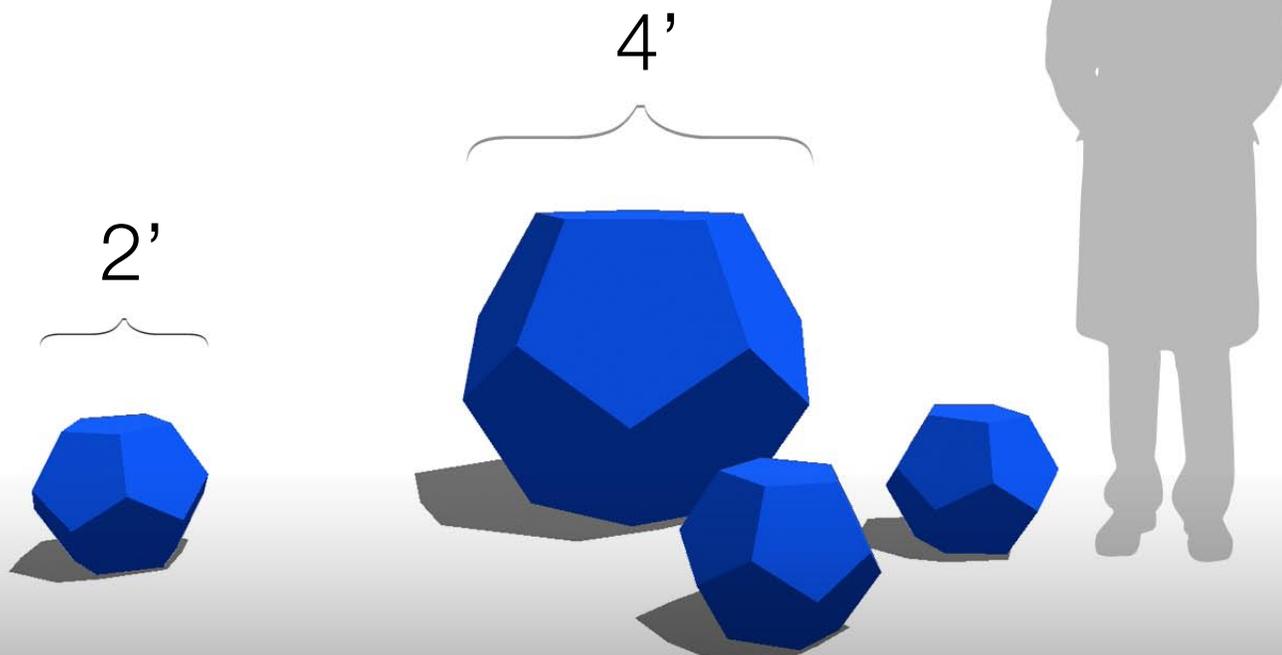
Like all public art, people have license to interpret the work varyingly, and in this case, this ability is crucial for the dodecahedron. The many cultural symbolisms for the dodecahedron show that this knowledge is not dangerous to the public, in fact quite the opposite\*. In many cultures around the world the elegance of the dodecahedron's shape and math have played important roles in both science and religion.

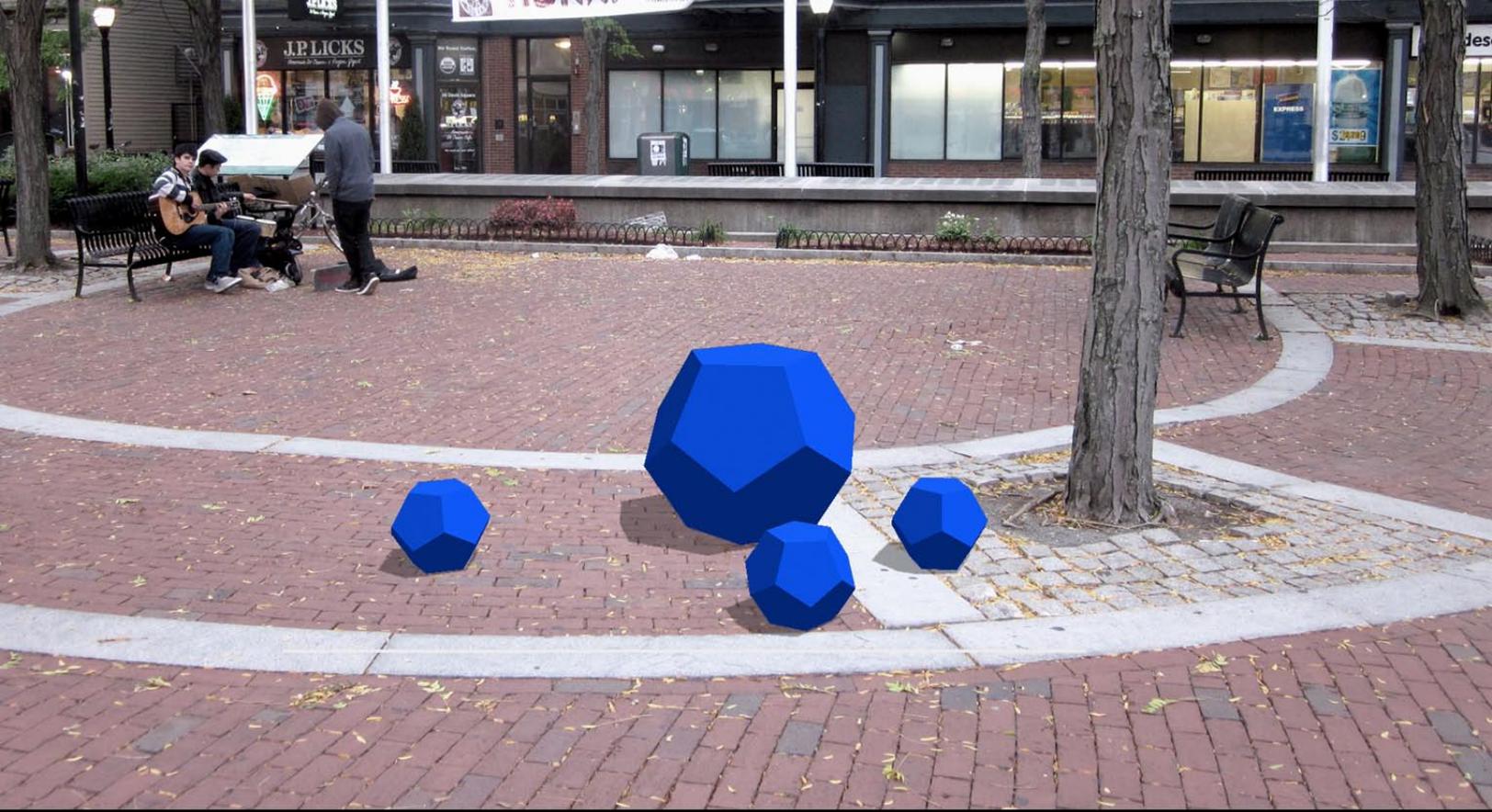
Recently a scientific paper on the shape of the universe stated that the gathered information infers a regular 12 sided shape. (J-P Luminet et al. 2003 Nature 425 593). It is a strange coincidence that the early Greeks believed that the universe was shaped like a dodecahedron as well.

These dodecahedrons are cast in fine Portland cement and painted with blue outdoor flooring paint. The following pages show placement in Davis Square.

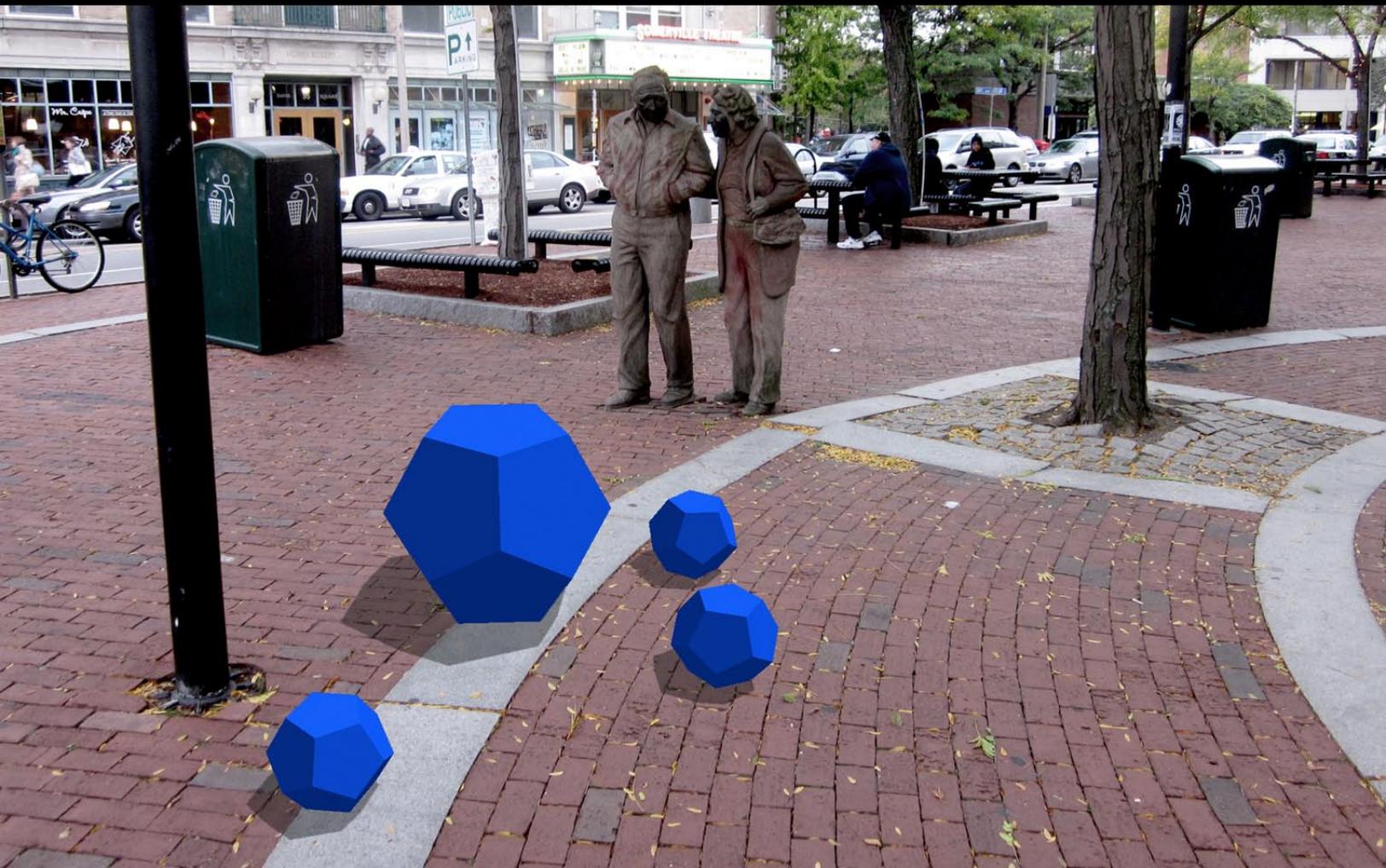
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\* Knowledge of the dodecahedron was never dangerous for the public to understand. Truly, its publication was a danger to the elite systems of control, of which it contradicted. However, Hippasus, as the informant of the knowledge, did pay with his life. I hope that this modern re-contextualizing will not lead me to sleep with the fishes as well.





Davis Square - Somerville



## Further Interest

A customized version of this proposal can be created, showcasing the work in a desired locality. Also a project timeline and itemized cost outline is available upon request.

## Contact

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