

Primary Sources:

MATERIALS FOR A NEW
CULTURAL ARCHIVE

Acknowledgements

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Primary Sources is edited by Donna Faye Burchfield and Lauren Bakst, Artistic Advisor and Interlocutor for the project, respectively. All of the texts included in this handbook were generated by and for Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia.

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Lastly, we are infinitely humbled by the generosity of contributions we received to the website—re-place-ing.org—in the form of Field Notes, nearly 100 to date. This handbook is a companion to the website. We encourage you to use the Inter-Compositions published here as navigational points of departure when exploring the archive of Field Notes that live online at re-place-ing.org.

This book was designed by Kelly Clawson.



Cover Image:

Faustin Linyekula working with students from the UArts School of Dance on *Philly Files* in North Philadelphia, 2016. Photo: Kristel Baldoz

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The Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia handbook is a location where the layered research and multiple practices of the project settle on the page side by side and are made visible.

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Introduction

By Donna Faye Burchfield

...if there is a push to forge a conceptual connection between material or concrete spaces, language, and subjectivity, openings are made possible for envisioning an interpretive alterable world, rather than a transparent and knowable world. —Katherine McKittrick

In my classes, we spend a good bit of time trying to wrap our heads (and bodies) around how language, the words we use to express our thoughts, can hold and shape our experiences. We come to realize how words often fail at their job of “standing in” for our deepest thoughts. Within our discussions, we spend a lot of time taking words apart, deconstructing them. Oftentimes, this process reminds us that thinking and discussing critically demands of us a certain “responsibility” to grasp the slippery nature of words and their multiple meanings. How funny to consider the very act of grasping something that is, by its very nature, slippery. We struggle through the process, and I remind everyone that we are “practicing” a way of knowing, a way of understanding. I remind them that we must work at thinking critically about representations. We enter into a kind of collective agreement. At times the process is very messy, and even confusing. Just when it seems that there is no way to get through the material at hand (a reading, a viewing, or a poem), someone will uncover a way of relating to the subject being discussed that brings a new understanding, or perspective, that is felt.

When considering the idea of writing “alongside” the project Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia, I decided to take it on like the planning of a class or maybe a talk for my students. What started as a conversation over coffee

at The Last Drop on 13th street in Philadelphia more than two years ago with Laurel Raczka (Executive Director) and Lisa Nelson-Haynes (former Associate Director) of the Painted Bride Art Center has become an ongoing research endeavor for me. It has also become a multi-platformed project funded by Pew Center for Arts and Heritage with many points of entry including artist talks, pot-lucks, walks, a website filled with “field notes” (www.re-place-ing.org) that includes everything from recipes to playlists, rehearsals, and gallery exhibits. It will also culminate in a festival of three performance events by artists Marty Pottenger, Faustin Linyekula, and Reggie Wilson from April 14th until April 24th, 2016.

Laurel was clear from the beginning that she wanted to imagine (together) a new project that would be far-reaching, one that would challenge how the Bride functioned as an arts center. She was also clear that she valued process, even processes that would challenge the Bride to really think, as an institution, in new ways. So, I asked, what *mattered* to the Bride? Historically, the Bride has placed itself “off of center.” As stated on the website, its history is “embedded within the Alternative Space movement of the 60s and 70s in Philadelphia, dedicated to maximizing cultural diversity and visibility in the arts.” To all who know the Bride, we know that community matters to them. To all who visit the Bride, we know that place matters. The exterior walls literally speak its history and call out to us as we approach. The challenge was to imagine an art project that “mattered,” one that could animate and bring to life new spaces for reflection and collective imagining. We agreed to put our trust in the fact that if the project could activate such reflective spaces, it was simultaneously building new networks of understanding and even making the city anew. Just like the walls embedded with memories that embrace the Bride’s home, helping to anchor it “in place,” in Philadelphia, the project’s processes would make visible new histories and relationships that could change the way we see and experience our city.

We started with a series of questions.

What makes Philadelphia, Philadelphia?

How might history work to “hold”
Philadelphia in its place?

How do we give voice to a city? How does and
can a city “speak back?” What are the many
ways a community might share their voices?

How might we uncover new narratives about
the city of Philadelphia? How can we see our
city in new ways, with fresh eyes?

How can artists serve as a catalyst in helping
generate new narratives?

And, more urgently, could the project help to
change the way we see our city, the Bride,
and ourselves?

Researching the works and art practices of Marty Pottenger, Faustin Linyekula, and Reggie Wilson became a way to consider, in broader terms, the questions that had surfaced. Bringing the work of these three artists into proximity with one another, alongside our questions, multiplied the ways we could consider the project's ambitions.

You are really asking any artist participating to provide you a kind of feedback. It's about the way we can share a theoretical and artistic moment together. What are the artists' answers?
—Nicolas Bourriaud ("Altermodern")

Marty Pottenger, an artist living and working in Portland, Maine, describes her current art practice as one that strongly considers creative engagement in the practice of government. As the lead artist in Portland's *Art at Work*, she focuses on the role of creativity within and alongside public-policy making. A recent project had police officers writing poetry with the focus on improving morale. She states, "when we make art we're smarter...we can work better together, we are more willing and able to hold contradictions and come up with complex challenges...ideas that shift the bones of the world."

Faustin Linyekula, an artist who lives and works in Kisangani, a city in the north of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, likes to describe himself as a storyteller. His art practice speculates on the roles of political, cultural, and social history in shaping contemporary life, especially in his home country. Studios Kabako, in Kisangani, has instituted a new technique described as "urban acupuncture" and works from the premise that art should be the first design component in building a better society. Faustin states, "art is essential...because it is important to have spaces to arrive to face our doubts, our fears, but also our joys, our happiness, even if extremely ephemeral ("Artist Focus")."

Reggie Wilson's Brooklyn-based company Fist and Heel Performance Group states in its mission that it seeks to present new performance work that investigates the intersections of culture and movement practices. In the development of his work *Moses(es)* in 2013, he activated a "community shout," which he described as both a sing-a-long and a lecture demonstration. The "shout" served as a time to share his field research in the Southern US, the Carribean and Southern Africa, and participants were encouraged to fully participate in the learning/singing of songs. During this process, Reggie imagines that participants will reflect on their own memories, of their own songs and the relationships they have to them. In my conversations with Reggie, he resists saying what his work is "about." He stresses the intersubjectivity of his art making—"there is the viewer, there is me (the choreographer), and then there are the performers. The interplay between all these multiple voices begins to shape the experience of the work...it is dynamic, interesting, and wonderful. It's like a conversation."



Language-ing the project, and finding a title for it, was a challenge. We began to dig for words that would help to guide our process, leaving space for experimentation and expanse.

Laurel and I made a long list of words and phrases for consideration. The list included *new geographies, reimagining, remapping, re-mapping, archiving histories, digging for the bones of a city's history, narratives of place, root systems of history, performing geographies, invisible geographies, multi-layered-ness, no there-there, mapping experience, performing the archive of a city, personal archives as the medium, the city that was supposed to be, reframing narratives of a city, city-making/art-making, rivers, gaps, & resistance, and geomythographies of a city.*

We knew that Philadelphia was a city steeped in history, and that it even makes history its commerce. Laurel was insistent that by “looking back,” she wanted us to simultaneously be looking to the future. So, in our planning meetings and discussions, we “unpacked” the word history in relationship to Philadelphia. We discussed the ways that memory could hold and shape history and the urgent need to consider the multiple voices that weave into the history of any city. We discussed ideas of personal and collective memory, historical and cultural memory. We thought about our city’s buildings, monuments, parks, festivals, and celebrations that connect the present to the past.

We settled on Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia as the project’s title.

No city’s history is the same as any other’s, and certainly none is quite like Philadelphia’s. But William Penn’s “green country” is a particularly appropriate place to study the contest over historical memory because the city was so closely associated with the nation’s founding revolution, and nation building, all rich subjects for historical memory. —Gary B. Nash

I. re-

We can think of “re” as we consider our contemporary relationship to time, with the increasing interest in repeating. We rewind. We rethink. We can retrace our steps, or even reimagine our future. We can retell a story. We can reimagine history. We reenact. Now, add the hyphen to the re, and rethink. By adding the hyphen, we are asked to repeat the action...to do it “again and again,” to re-place our thinking.

When we place “re-” in front of PLACE, we are reminded of how time can be embedded in our sense of place.

II. PLACE

We can think of place as a way to consider our relationships to space. We live in a place. We gather in a place. We “belong” in a place, or not? We even remark about the “sense of a place.”

We used all “caps” in the title, PLACE, to emphasize the focus on the city as subject. By adding the “-ing” to PLACE, we make place a verb.

III. -ing

We can think of the -ing as energy. Adding the “-ing” to re-place-ing reminded us that the project is an ongoing process...a doing...an action. It is a practice. It takes energy, involves movement and work.

IV. Philadelphia

We wanted to “try out” the practice of re-place-ing with Philadelphia as the subject. And, if there is “local language” to be identified in the city of Philadelphia, it would be the language of “history.” What happens when you learn something new about your city? We imagined that this practice could re-place forgotten, hidden, or erased narratives. And, in the process, the project would spark new understandings and relationships to the city.

Re-Memberings

On one of Reggie's research trips to Philadelphia, he wanted to visit Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church. Lisa had arranged for the historian of Mother Bethel, Ann Saunders, to meet us at the museum in the church's basement area. We spent the morning there, walking through the site, hearing stories of the church's long and remarkable history, and looking through the artifacts. Reggie saw an historic map on the wall showing the location of the African Children's School. As we left the church's parking lot, he wanted to walk to try to find what remained of the school. We ended up behind a row of townhouses in an area now known as Society Hill with Reggie peeking through a small fenced yard to cast his eyes on the place the map had highlighted. We found no visible trace of the school. But, nonetheless, there we stood, following Reggie's lead, and in our imaginations, re-place-ing this historic school in Philadelphia. Edourd Glissant, in writing about poetics of landscape, helps to expand our thinking about the relationships between place and self. He reminds us of the multiple ways that place might be constructed, recognized, and considered. His writings give credence to local histories, to personal narratives, and to contradictions. This "place" that Glissant helps us to imagine is always in the making, always changing, and speaks our name.

That thing we call a place is the intersection of many changing forces passing through, whirling around, mixing, dissolving, and exploding in a fixed location. To write about a place is to acknowledge that phenomena often treated separately—ecology, democracy, culture, storytelling, urban design, individual life histories and collective endeavors—coexist. They coexist geographically, spatially, in place,

and to understand a place is to engage with
braided narratives and sui generis exploration.
—Rebecca Solnit (2014)

Marty's visits to Philly always include community gatherings. On one visit, she asked for folks to gather and share their "tree story." Trees were just one of Marty's many entry points as she began her process. I attended one of these functions, and the group sitting around a table at the Bride became acquainted by sharing, verbally, a story about a tree. One person spoke of a tree in the city of Philadelphia that he returns to each year to remember a friend who took his life, there, under the tree. As he described the location of the tree, I knew exactly which tree he was describing. There was a collective agency, a kind of kinship, which emerged during the sharings. As I left the Bride that night, I found myself wanting to change my route. I just wanted to look at the trees on my way home. Franco Moretti, in *Atlas of the European Novel*, proposes the idea of "intersecting, verbal-visual discourse" in considering the role of literature in shaping our relationships to geography and vice versa. For example, he asks the reader to imagine all of the cities brought to life while reading historic novels. What, he asks, brings a city into focus? While reading his book, I found myself wondering how re-place-ing might be bringing Philadelphia into focus.

...creative visionings of the city develop a form
of utopian urbanism...not just based on the city
as a fixed form, but...[one that] promotes an
understanding of the spaces and times of the
city as an ongoing production, and in continual
transformation. —Harriet Hawkins

Faustin's journey to Philadelphia is the longest, at approximately 6,800 miles. After arriving for one of his residencies, he stepped immediately off the plane to the stage at the Painted Bride to perform. As the lights went out in the audience and sound filled the theater, he slowly entered the downstage space. In my mind I was retracing the distance he had traveled. His first gesture was to simply open his hand, wide, his palm facing the audience. Following that gesture, he began to move and speak, reminding us that he was...most certainly...both here (in Philadelphia, at the Bride, on that stage) and there (at home, in Kisangani, thousands of miles away). Memory serves as a kind of transport system...moving distant places closer, blurring time between then and now.

Place, memory, being...I live in a city that is forgetting itself, forgetting itself even as it constantly remakes itself...a city driven by change. As it forgets itself, I lose myself. We are relational beings, our ontology predicated on our ties to each other and to the places we inhabit.
—Joseph Wilder

Months into my readings alongside the project, I remembered a book that I had used in my classes when I first began teaching college students. It was *Reimagining America* edited by Mark O'Brien and Craig Little. A great friend and artist Ray Schwartz, had given me the book as a gift in the spring of 1995. At that time, the book was out of print, but I was able to contact Craig Little, who said he had a box of the books in his closet at home. So he mailed them to me for use in my class. The book had been an outgrowth of a project "Voices of Dissent." The project had, ironically, been made up of a group of like-minded theater artists, in Philadelphia who, in an effort to call attention to the growing interest in the need for conversation around the arts and social change, held a month-long festival and three-day conference in April of 1987 (organized

as a counter-celebration of the Constitutional Bicentennial). During the event, the Painted Bride turned over their space to the group for the month. Now, exactly 29 years later, the Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia project and the Painted Bride gesture back to that group of organizers by asking new questions and by placing the trust (once again) in the artists and the community members who have joined in the process to help make the city (and the Bride) anew. Projects like these, blind-partnered after almost three decades, speak to the ongoing urgency to provide a means to expand the language, strategies, and content around the complex relationships between art, art making, our cities, and the world.

Donna Faye Burchfield is Professor and Director for the School of Dance at the University of the Arts. She is the Artistic Advisor to Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia.

historical memory

practicing
ethics of memory

multi-memory

personal memory

a. Collective memory
living memory

* contemporary memory

o. social memory

What are the Archives

"Archival forms"

highlighting less
familiar places
of memory.

o

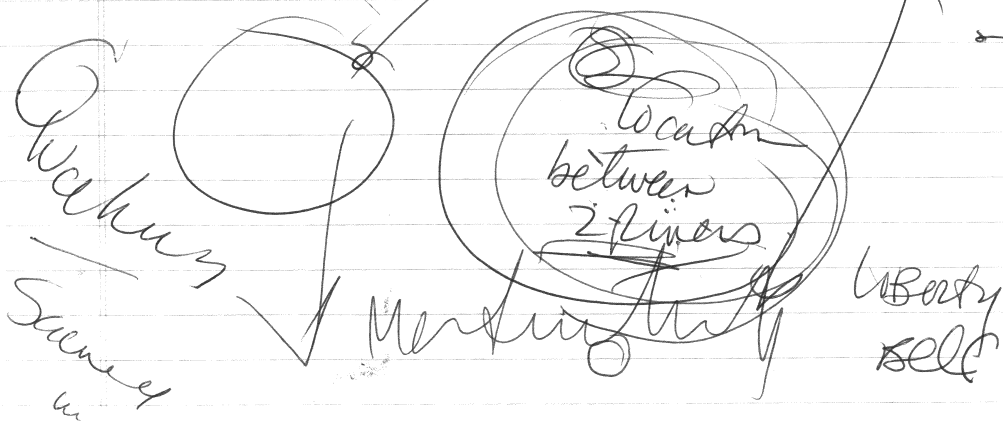
"

o



→ social historical

8 x [] = 8 sections



Wahung
Sweeney



On Field Notes

By Lauren Bakst

One of the reasons that walking has been such a key subject for me is that walking is a meandering thread that can move through anything—literally, bodily—just as reveries allow you to connect things as we actually experience them. One of the examples I always use is that when you talk with your best friend you talk about love and politics and the future and recipes. The way we’ve been taught to write is as though those things have nothing to do with each other, but in fact they remind us of each other—that is how our minds work. Our minds don’t run on highways, they run on those little trails in the underbrush. — Rebecca Solnit (“The Poetic Politics of Space”)

In imagining what Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia could generate, it was important from the beginning that the project find ways to collect, gather, and share the personal narratives that might give a new shape to how we think, feel, and know this city. We decided to create a website for the project that would function as a place in and of itself, a place where the many voices we hoped to include and the different kinds of information those voices would speak could live alongside one another. It was crucial that the site be an open portal, where we would not only share upcoming events and reflections on the work of the artists, but where anyone could submit their Philadelphia story.

We decided to structure the site as an archive of “field notes.”

Field notes are historically linked with anthropology and ethnography, referring to the notes a researcher takes while making observations “in the field.” What happens when we re-frame the “field note” through the lens of Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia, a project seeking to build an expanded archive of cultural memory that re-situates how we see the city? As Donna Faye said in a project meeting, “The way we think about a place changes when someone else’s story is shared.” If, as citizens, we are the researchers and archivists of our lives, relationships, and communities, then what would the “field notes” of Philadelphia look like, we wondered, from the perspectives of the artists, thinkers, cooks, poets, laborers, gardeners, dancers, *et cetera*—the people of Philly? Is the field note a sensation or a memory?; a recipe or grocery list?; an image or a sound? Could the website be a site of exchange—where you come to share a story and in the process discover someone else’s?

The notes started coming in, and the more we received the more we learned about the lenses through which we feel ourselves in a place. The repetition of certain contents pointed us toward a system of organization—notes from the street, from rivers and trees, on food and sound. There were Meta-Notes that expanded on the project’s conceptual frame and helped to ground it in a larger context. Project Notes reflected on the work of the artists. Editor’s Notes became the place where I could tease out the shared themes, questions, and counterpoints that emerged across and in between the multiplicity of voices gathered on the site.

Inter-Compositions

inter-

prefix

1. *between or among*
2. *together, mutually, or reciprocally*

When it came time to put together this handbook, Donna Faye and I looked to the website—a place where we could locate the information that had been generated via the project thus far. We realized that on the site, the field notes exist separately, with individual links and pages, but we knew that in order to understand what these notes might tell us “about” Philadelphia, we would have to see them side by side. We asked: What would happen if we let these notes speak to each other?

To answer this question, we reached out to people we felt possessed a unique relationship to the project and to Philly—Wilmer Wilson, an artist who contributed one of the first Street Notes to the site; Mary Ebeling and Tsitsi Jaji, who were both involved in initial Steering Committee Meetings; Joshua Block, a teacher whose high school students have been creating Field Notes; and lastly Laurel Raczka, Executive Director of the Bride.

We asked each of them to create Inter-Compositions of the Field Notes—to draw together a selection of field notes and tell us why they chose those specific notes. What conversation is created by bringing these notes together? How is our sense of the city re-framed?

We offer these Inter-Compositions as a channel into the archive of Field Notes that lives on re-place-ing.org. There you will find the Field Notes excerpted here in full form, as well as many, many others. We hope that in visiting the site, you can use these Inter-Compositions as a model from which to consider other possible connections among the narratives you discover.

I'll leave you now with excerpts from two field notes that continue to resonate with me. These notes animate the interplay between sound and movement in the body, in a city. They speak to the transmission of something personal to something shared and vise-versa, that feeling of being one among many that a city so engenders:

Project Note: Reggie

"Moving bodies: Speaking bodies" by Maria Urrutia

Tap the chest with a closed fist. Tap.
pause.
TAP.TAP.TAP.

... Ah, it is in the body that we find ourselves in deepest conversation. In our most vulnerable moments where we cannot hide from what we are attempting to say in words, but can only successfully express in movement. We all begin to blend our individual expression and morph the lingua franca of technique to suit our needs of what we wish to share, teach, and then re-translate into our own bodies even further.

Sound Note:

"Birth and Rebirth" by Chello Sherman

I was born in Philadelphia in 1962, my father was a police officer and I remember listening to the radio during some difficult times with my mother worried for his safe return. I remember the parks and walking to school and the music

that I heard through the rush of the wind in the trees.

Coming back here as a student, it is even more dynamic—the sounds of the train stations and the streets, the people and the cars hushing past with bits of music emerging from their open windows.

Lauren Bakst is an artist/writer/teacher/dramaturg navigating the expanded fields of dance and performance. She is the Interlocutor for Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia.



Inter-Composition No. 1

By Tsitsi Jaji

I first came to the Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia project in the spring of 2015, just as I was starting to feel like, after seven years in the city, I was finding my place, finding my people. The Painted Bride had a wonderful program called “Community Table,” and I’d brought my class from Penn there to organize an event with the help of Lisa Nelson-Haynes. When Lisa invited me a few weeks later to the first discussion of Re-PLACE-ing with artists, educators, and community members who would help envision its unusual ambitions, I was thrilled. I was part of three planning discussions where I was impressed with the creativity and braveness of the group in figuring out how to do something really new, by allowing Philly folks to reflect on what makes this city one we love.

It also happened to be my last few months in Philly, as I decided to take a job elsewhere. So now, looking at the amazing collection of field notes is a window for me to remember Illadelph with fondness, and I think, with sadness, that I never really discovered the city, I never let myself fall in love with it because I never saw its many faces. I picked the three notes here because they express a nostalgia I feel, and they are a mix of newly-arrived and old-time Philadelphians.

Anna Kroll's River Note "Alluvium" reflects on her experience moving to Philly. She starts with some video memories of the bodies of water that were never more than a few minutes away and comes to treasure the rivers that sandwich Philly. Her note portrays homesickness, or remembering our past, as a way to orient us in our present futures... just as she remembers growing up near water in Florida, and she comes to find Philly's Schuylkill and Delaware orienting her thoughts as well as her physical orientation through the city.

River Note:

"Alluvium" by Anna Kroll

Water is rarely truly
stagnant. It flows. It
steams. It seeps. Slight
disturbances cumulate
out across its surface.
It can adapt and it
can destroy.

Joan K. Sloan's "Not Your Usual Tree Story" also picks up on the theme of memories of home, and just like the title says, her story about cherry blossom trees (those gorgeous clichés of springtime) is anything but usual.

So often, nostalgia for our childhood homes edits out the complexity of our own histories. Joan's note describes the many social meanings of two cherry trees in front of her yard—from shade and beauty, to a site for stashing drugs, to a symbol of power struggles. A tree is not an object but part of a lived geography.

But the most important part of her story, I think, is not so much about the tree, but a moment of tender humane connection—when the police come to arrest her father for chopping down the tree, they let him go take care of two neighborhood senior ladies he cared for before taking him to the station. Joan's father, like an orchard tender who knows each tree, prunes it, props it up so it will grow straight, harvests from it—he was a cultivator, a man who cared for the branches of his community. Philadelphia, City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection.

Tree Note:

"Not Your Usual Tree Story" by Joan K. Sloan

The drug dealers were stashing their drugs in the tree and they were conducting their drug transactions under the darkness of the trees at night. My dad witnessed this as he came home late from his job as a bus driver and he and mom could also see what was going on from our front window. My dad called the police numerous times with no resolution....So he took matters into his own hands. My dad used a saw to cut down both of the trees beside our house. And when he did the drug dealers called the cops.

My time in Philadelphia was full of wonders, but, ironically, I often missed trees. Even though where I worked at Penn the grounds were so cultivated that it sometimes felt like a park, so many parts of the city seemed to go for blocks and blocks with no trees.

Listening to Brenda Dixon Gottschild bring trees and rivers together in the video of her “Walk in the Wissahickon,” I learned that the entire Wissahickon Park is on Lenape land, and that Wissahickon means yellow river or catfish river. For true Philly-folks that is probably obvious knowledge, but I had managed to spend seven years in the city and never wander through this treasure of a place. Watching Brenda lead her group I was struck by how special the easy connections women strike up in motion are—Black Girls Run, double dutch on a playground, ladies night out at a dance club. I also noticed how easy the interracial interactions among the walkers seemed—something I value even more having moved to the South. As one of the participants said, “it felt good being part of a group like this,” even for a virtual walker like me. I’m so grateful for the time to spend walking and gazing up at the pattern of leaves against sky, what Brenda described as “an upside down Modigliani.” And next time I’m in town I’ll be heading for a walk below the Wissahickon trees!

Tsitsi Jaji is a former Philly resident and an associate professor of English at Duke University.

Tree Note:

“A Walk in the Wissahickon with Brenda Dixon Gottschild”

In July of 2015, Brenda Dixon Gottschild led a meditative walk through Wissahickon Park as a part of Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia. This “Tree Note” shares video footage from that experience.

Inter-Composition No. 2

By Joshua Block

Teenagers have unique perspectives on our city. They exist in a liminal zone, not yet expected to inhabit the adult world, yet beyond childhood. They move around independently, eager to observe and question. My Science Leadership Academy students bring a wide range of Philly experiences and perspectives to the Re-PLACE-ing project.

Katia Hadjeb came to Philly in 2012 from Algeria not knowing any English. She had to learn to exist in a new culture and a new language while negotiating a vision impairment. Her Vision Note reminds us that blindness is not a limitation. She describes how she learned to navigate a new city and all that she knows, feels, and experiences when out on the street.

Ava Olsen used to play in the rubble of Northern Liberties. Her Street Note asks readers to see the “ghosts of her past,” now buried under a condo complex which speaks, “I used to be something else.” What was once a sanctuary has become memory.

Jade Schweitzer is drawn to the contrast of a sunrise and a piece of trash in the street. She imagines a story behind this worthless object and contemplates “the pieces of ourselves we lose in all the motions of our daily lives.” She suggests that our problem with litter may also be a problem of forgotten memories.

Joshua Block teaches students English and History at Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia.

Vision Note:

"Blindness is Not a Limitation" by Katia Hadjeb

It is true that my eyes do not see as well as yours, but humans have other senses that you may take for granted.

Don't worry, I know when to go and when to stop.

You look around in all directions, but I do not even have to turn my head; the sound of the engine reveals the speed, distance, and direction.

When I make a move I know for sure that it's safe.

Street Note:

"Northern Liberties" by Ava Olsen

The location of those condos used to be the go-to place for all the neighborhood kids to play and dream new adventures, but all people see now are giant, modern buildings. I want everyone to know that we used to play there and that the ghosts of our past remain there playing indefinitely while new tenants live their everyday lives.

Street Note:

"The Things We Ignore" by Jade Schweitzer

As city folks we are always rushing through our activities and sometimes we lose pieces of ourselves in all the motions of our daily lives. These pieces are piling up in gutters all over the city, taking on a life of their own. The more frightening part of all this is not that things are forgotten or discarded, but that we don't seem to notice. The clutter seems so unimportant. We walk through a city of trash and forgotten memories without a second glance.

Inter-Composition No. 3

By Wilmer Wilson

In her Meta-Note “Optics,” Heather Holmes explores the slippery relationship between the physical reality of the city, the digital geotagged image, and the virtual social arena of Instagram. It suggests that virtual realms are now a foundational superstructure or prosthetic through which we orient our existence within a physical place. This manifested saliently as I read Bernardine Watson’s “My Philadelphia Story.” I was and still am stunned to learn of the Crispus Attucks Hotel via Watson’s summoning of her foundational physical relationship to the city. As I write this, the hotel’s existence has now populated my internal map of the city, even though I still yet only know of it through her post and a handful of stray excerpts on the internet.

What comes into and falls out of our limited view, and why? In the same way that Holmes’s bedroom is consistently mistaken by Instagram for a CVS, I am left to wonder what programmatic patterns are at play that have prevented me from knowing the Crispus Attucks Hotel as such until now. Najja Zimele-Keita begins to work to the fringes of such patterning in his Project Note on Marty Pottenger’s work. There is a moment where he identifies some subtle subversions of access patterns playing out where there is usually only fleeting infrastructural access to green space. He sees the Henry Ave. fishermen and Fletcher St. Horsemen bringing the green Philadelphia into crevices of the city where it is not planned for and not supported. This folding together of multiple places, this friction necessarily caused by proximity, seems at the heart of what Re-PLACE-ing’s field notes are trying to examine.

Wilmer Wilson IV is an artist living in Philadelphia, PA. Information on his work can be found at www.r-e-c-u-r-r-i-n-g.info.

Meta-Note:

“Optics” by Heather Holmes

Instead of using Instagram as a straightforward tool through which to process real space, I find it much more interesting and critical to use it as a way to distort and toggle with reality. Instagram allows us to view place and the body’s relationship to it in absurd and spontaneous ways. Earlier this year, I began geotagging all pictures I took in my room as located in CVS. A friend of mine often posts intimate bedroom selfies with the geotag “West Philly Area.” On Instagram, there can be at least a partial collapse of the strict categories of public and private space, a casual diffusion of intimacy into the public domain. Though this diffusion is not new, historically, the immediacy with which it is possible through Instagram is certainly a recent development. [...] If Instagram has radical potential, it is as a place—one whose hashtags and geotags allow for spontaneous content creating friction with one another.

Street Note:

"My Philadelphia Story" by Bernardine (Dine) Watson

"Freedom"

I remember a flowered bed spread
tucked neatly around a fold out sofa
a polyester garden of wilted pansies
likely chosen to match the fading wall paper
a vain attempt, I'm sure, to bring the outside in
as they say in all the magazines.

I remember a console sitting over in the corner
as old and tired as the fading wall paper
but Sammy Davis Jr. would sing right to me
such high fidelity!
I'd twirl and twirl
going around with the record
catching glimpses of pansies
from the corner of my eye.

I could not have been more than three or four
too young to understand the meaning of anything
our two-room apartment down a long dark hallway
first floor back behind the colored hotel
my parents sleeping under a polyester garden
on a sofa that folded out
into a room meant for living.

I was much too young and didn't understand
that the voice I heard
the man crooning in the console
was a one-eyed negro singing for his supper
and the colored hotel was named for Crispus Attucks
a runaway slave
and the first man to die
for the American dream.

How could I know?
As I twirled and twirled
around in that room
that my mother was dreaming on the fold out sofa
of a house with a yard full of real pansies blooming
and a bedroom fit for a proper lady.
What did I know?
I was just a little girl
who could feel the music
and it felt like freedom.

Project Note: Marty

"The Canopy—Marty Pottenger and the Significance of a Tree Story" by Najja Zimele-Keita

Regarding my concerns about modern life in America, I am so often struck by what wealth and privilege mean for access, to natural space or otherwise. Think about the property values of the real estate surrounding Central Park, but I want to look beyond that, to the grey areas and liminal spaces.

I am continually intrigued by poor and working class Philadelphians, in particular, who subvert the growing privilege to green space trope. I think of the men I see fishing at Henry Ave. and West River Drive; pre-teen bike crews, wheelie-ing down the Drive, the family reunions and church picnics at the ubiquitous "Plat" (aka the Belmont Plateau); and the Fletcher St. Horsemen who stable horses in Strawberry Mansion and race them all through Fairmount Park.

Inter-Composition No. 4

By Mary Ebeling

I found the task of selecting only three field notes particularly difficult, as all of the field notes were so interesting and in many ways seemed to be in conversation with one another.

While these notes are beautiful in many ways, what moved me most across them was how the authors found themselves strangers in their neighborhoods, and the work they did to make their presence in the place be a presence in a community. Through these notes, I see the connections in regards to: displacement, strangers coming into a new space, re-centering the sacredness of the space, re-centering the elders of the neighborhood to a place of centrality—be they trees, ancestors, or communities long displaced, listening to the hidden, forgotten, the consciously ignored, neglected stories of city's original residents, re-orienting oneself, in a conscious and considered way, to be an engaged member of an adopted community

Above all, in each of these notes, I learned the importance and significance of listening to and learning from those that came before us or from our neighbors, those that we share a community with here in Philadelphia.

Mary Ebeling is a sociologist based in Philadelphia. Her work is focused on the study of science and technologies as a sociopolitical practice and the politics of data. She also works on social justice issues concerning urban agriculture and access to food and socially engaged, alternative art-making practices and collective work.

Street Note:

"900 Block S. Paxson Street" by Valerie V. Gay

Together, we would repurpose our household goods to bring new purpose to the wall dividing our community. My yard became the collection site for donated items, and I was in charge of the "Artistic Vision." The 29-year old block captain became the point person. A 14-year old appointed himself the "Youth Captain," and together we became the leadership team.

Over seven months, approximately 45 people worked to transform the 100' long by 3' high wall that once symbolized the blight in our community. The wall now shows what is possible when people come together and give what they have to build up their community. Our final touch was to invite back all who had helped in any way to dip their hands in paint and put them on the wall. Together, we reclaimed the wall, with our own hands.

Food Note:

"Everything I Know" by Deborah Rudman

We participate in sustainable practices on our own stoops, connecting each other to available resources to build the local economy, protect green-space, and fight for food justice. [...] For our Front Yard Garden project, we got our block involved in cleaning up our corner and secured permission from the owner to make it a garden for growing vegetables. [...] Before we began growing food in raised beds we tested the soil and planted sunflowers which aerated under the surface. Their large roots occupied what had once been the basement of a candy factory—or was it a candle factory that burned down? Maybe both! So the story goes...

Street Note:

"Watkins Street" by Amelia Longo

It's been almost two years since I moved here. I've gotten to know my neighbors, and it feels like home. I say hi to everyone I see on my block, but it's still hard to know where I do and don't belong. I bought my house in part as a commitment to Philadelphia, but to be honest, I don't know how long I'll be in this house, or in Point Breeze. If I get involved and then move, is that just interference? Am I imposing something on the existing community?

Inter-Composition No. 5

By Laurel Raczka

For me the conversations carried on through the field notes bring forward our human being-ness. Each of the field notes is a way into a deeper understanding of becoming, being, and belonging where we are—brought together in physical as well as emotional spaces. I am drawn to the notes that speak about PLACE as the medium for creating new ways to experience our human being-ness—the connections we make in our daily lives.

Laurel Raczka is the Executive Director of the Painted Bride Art Center and co-Creator of Re-PLACE-ing Philadelphia.

Project Note: Faustin

"The Philadelphia Experiment"

by Najja Zimele-Keita

As I sit now, listening to
Faustin explain the ideal of the
circle—the connections we make
which create shared, common
spaces—I'm reminded of Faustin
awash in sound and light, deftly
navigating the dance floor, creating
circles of his own in Philadelphia.

Meta-Note:

"Who Would You Want to Start A Culture With?"

by M. Nzadi Keita

That transformative gaze turns forward now ...
Insisting that we sustain each other as decent
human beings. That gaze sees the rampant,
screamingly obvious beauty in our communities.
Even amidst economic plunder and social erosion.
Imposers and imposters. Our beauty dares to
sustain the expectation of courtesy: greetings at
a bus stop or a smile on the sidewalk. Our beauty
rejects fear and shame. Doing steady battle against
those forces. Doing steady battle for dignity.

Project Note: Faustin

"Refractions of a Broken Circle" by Lauren Bakst

In his lecture at UArts, Faustin challenged us not only to acknowledge the broken circle, but to take responsibility to "remake the circle again even if it's temporary," "to reimagine who we are with a full awareness of the ruins around and inside us." In all aspects of his work, Faustin propels us into the present, inviting us to always be in the process of re-make-ing the circle.

Street Note:

"Mapping Memories" by Mary Ebeling

As a transplant to Philadelphia, having made the city my home for nearly eight years now, I often wonder about what memories residents hold in their hearts about the redeveloped spaces of Philadelphia. This relationship is something I call "emotional mapping," or the ways that we "map on" our personal memories, emotional lives, and images we hold in our hearts, to a place that has radically changed.

Street Note:

"Germantown Ave." by Gerry Givnish

The street wakes up around 6:30 with delivery trucks and yellow school busses rumbling over the cobblestone roadway.

At the corners, people gather for the 23 bus. On Friday, the Masjid comes to life with women in burquas and men with beards going to prayer; with food vendors and merchandise carts set up on the sidewalk; and with the jamming of traffic. Between the daycare next to our house and the DePaul Catholic (preK-8), children come and go from 7-5 ... The familiar faces, the presence of history, the ample greenspaces, the easy rhythms satisfy my idea of the good life.



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