

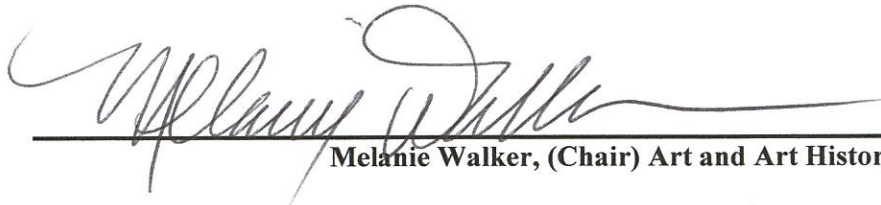
Windows Out

By

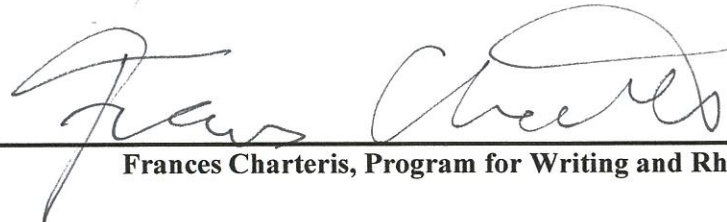
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CONTENTS

<u>ABSTRACT</u>	<u>iv</u>
<u>AKNOWLEDEMENTS</u>	<u>v</u>
 <u>CHAPTER ONE:</u>	
<u>Window Out Introduction</u>	<u>1-2</u>
 <u>CHAPTER TWO:</u>	
<u>Making a World</u>	<u>3- 4</u>
 <u>CHAPTER THREE:</u>	
<u>Abundant Garden Visualization</u>	<u>5-7</u>
 <u>CHAPTER FOUR:</u>	
<u>Health of Society</u>	<u>8-11</u>
 <u>CHAPTER FIVE:</u>	
<u>Conversations with the Land</u>	<u>12-14</u>
 <u>CHAPTER SIX:</u>	
<u>Survival</u>	<u>15-17</u>
 <u>CHAPTER SEVEN:</u>	
<u>Healing</u>	<u>18</u>
 <u>CHAPTER EIGHT:</u>	
<u>Reflection</u>	<u>19-25</u>
 <u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	

Abstract

Santiago, Adrianna (M.F.A., Media Arts)

Windows Out, 2011

Thesis directed by Professor Melanie Walker

The *Windows Out* project is a collaborative work that raises awareness; it exhibits the interconnectivity of art and life. Life offers infinite moments of art and beauty; seen and unseen. Imagination and community participation provide opportunities for individuals to be part of the process—to *be* the art. Through the community garden, the power of art is charged with a purpose towards action in the world.

Windows function as safe keepers, but are also the threshold that connect the interior with the exterior. The garden also serves as a vehicle of connection between private and public realms; it is a site where life flourishes and decays through natural cycles of time; an intangible connection between individuals is shared through refuge and reflection. Light nourishes the growth of plants and inspires transformation of individuals.

Windows Out is a community art project created in collaboration with the Harm Reduction Action Center in Denver, Colorado.

Sincere gratitude for every individual involved in the making of this work!
It would not have been possible without the contributions of many people.

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The *Windows Out* project is a collaborative work that raises awareness; it exhibits the interconnectivity of art and life. At the heart of *Windows Out* are nine light boxes: they document and transform the people and plants of the therapeutic gardening that I organized at the Harm Reduction Action Center in Denver, Colorado. The work is a synthesis of visual art, sustainable urban agriculture and the healing power both practices provide for active and recovering IV drug users. Methods of performance, sculpture and photography are woven together to represent healing through collaboration. The goal of this work is more than aesthetic—it is a call for individuals to address societal health issues.

I have always been interested in traditions that foster sharing among communities such as art, gardening and cooking. The Harm Reduction Action Center, also known as the Red House, contacted me to install a community garden. Because I previously worked at the Boys & Girls Club in the same neighborhood, it felt serendipitous that this opportunity presented itself. I found it easy to connect to the residents of the Red House. The Red House is a drop-in site that serves IV drug users, their family and friends. Much of the Red House's population is homeless, on parole or hiding from the law. The center provides health care assistance, educational programs, meals, laundry facilities, showers and a supportive community. My curiosity about social and environmental health played an important role in beginning to bridge gaps between longtime residents of the neighborhood and the network of artists who know the area exclusively as the Santa Fe Arts District.

After beginning the project with the Red House, my role transformed from being an outsider of the community to being absorbed by the community. The most important sustained action that occurred through the garden project was by the individuals; They took ownership over the work. As an artist, I was “called to action,” to become a catalyst for the community's voices to be heard. In doing this, my voice dissolved into that of the Red House community. We became a team that found creative solutions through imagination and experimentation.

When people cultivate connections with the land through organic gardening, a symbiotic process of healing occurs. The light that radiates from the boxes in *Windows Out* symbolizes both the sun's

energy needed to sustain the plant and nurturing effects of the garden on the human spirit. Like a camera reflects light from outside, I intend for the window light boxes to bring awareness to issues of sustainable agricultural practices. Growing an urban, community-based vegetable and herb garden generates knowledge and collective experiences. My mind, heart and spirit flourished as a result of this project.

Making a World

Joseph Buey's notion that, "Everyone is an artist."¹ is empowering; it encourages social participation to achieve great artistic achievement. Intervening in the urban development of the land, Bueys planted 7,000 Oak trees, which were accompanied by basalt stones in the city of Kassel. The organization of this project resulted in a series of conversations among participants concerning a wide range of issues, from its impact on city planning to its meaning for future generations. His work was motivated by his beliefs in art being capable of achieving revolutionary change. Like Bueys, I pursued my instinct to be an active member of society, and worked with others who shared my creative ambition to make a world filled with beauty and purpose.



Artist Rick Lowe initiated *Project Row House*, which exists in the Third Ward in Houston, Texas. Lowe was hosting a group of high school students in his studio and explains the conversation that ensued: "I was doing big, billboard size paintings and cutout sculptures dealing with social issues...one of the students told me that, sure, the work reflected what was going on in the community, but it wasn't what the

¹ Willoughby, Sharp, (1974) "Joseph Beuys, Public Dialogues"

community needed. If I was an artist, he said, why didn't I come up with some kind of creative solution to issues instead of just telling people like him what they already knew. That was the defining moment that pushed me out of the studio."² I embrace his idea that art can be the way people live and strive to create a collective residential environment that focuses on creativity.



According to Lucy Lippard, "Teaching people how to see is an artist's job."³ From my perspective, an artist's role contains social responsibility. My interdisciplinary approach to art brings together a diverse group of talented individuals—all have the potential to create, inspire and initiate change. I found that my consistent presence at the Red House led to members of the community to entrust and feel invested in our joint vision. This involvement became contagious. As more members of the Red House community became involved in the garden, dialogue surrounding their own experiences and desire for change ensued. Over the next year, discussions revealed how growth and change of both individuals and political policies require choosing to be an active participant in the process— and creating an environment where life can thrive.

² Lowe, Rick (2006-12-17) "Art Is Where the Home Is" New York Times

³ Lippard, Lucy (2011-1-11) "People and Place: Why Ecology Matters" University of Colorado, Boulder

“When we love the earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully.” ~ bell hooks

Abundant Garden Visualization

My family experiences are grounded in the natural world. My Grandmother Rose, whose yard was filled with extraordinary rose bushes, and my Grandpa Andy who maintained an urban farm of animals and a large garden that produced many fruits and vegetables, both have influenced me greatly. My mother is also a master gardener; she grows fruits and vegetables, taught me Colorado xeriscape and currently keeps a rain forest array of plants in Washington State.

When I was young, gardening was a part of my daily life. I learned about the world through hands-on discovery. I found wonder and contentment in my experience outside the windows of my home. At the same time, the darker side of life in the urban neighborhoods that I lived in growing up spurred dreams that flooded my resting hours. In the daylight hours, I saw life. I found comfort submersing myself in hands on gardening. Time for reflection and growth occurred. I observed the inter-workings of the communities surrounding me: plants, insects, animals, and humans. From sun up to sun down I experienced the bliss of nature. This visualization burned in my mind and overtook the dark dreams of my sleep.

In bell hooks’ book, *Belonging*, she addresses the interconnectivity of people and the land. She describes, “I could stand with my grandfather Daddy Jerry and look out at the fields of growing vegetables, tomatoes, corn collards, and know that this was his handiwork. I could see the look of pride on his face as I expressed wonder and awe... .”⁴ hooks’ understanding of the gratification that comes from proving for yourself and the understanding that takes place of the world around you through the garden process is something that I value and share.

Three Ecologies by Guatarri illustrates how our society is deteriorating in the name of

⁴ hooks, bell (2004) “Belonging: A Culture of Place” Taylor & Francis, p. 34

scientific and technological advancements. “The Earth is undergoing a period of intense techno-scientific transformations. If no remedy is found, the ecological disequilibrium this has generated will ultimately threaten continuation of life on the planet’s surface. Alongside these upheavals, human modes of life, both individual and collective are progressively deteriorating. Kinship networks tend to be reduced to bare minimum; domestic life is being poisoned by the gangrene of mass-media consumption; family and married life are frequently ‘ossified’ by a sort of standardization of behaviour; and neighborhood relations are generally reduced to their meanest expression...”⁵ Scientific and technological advances are compromising our ways of living in order to accommodate a faster paced life. As a result, a materialistic nature has become widespread in society; materialism replaces the richness of cultural influence on daily rituals.

Traditions of tending the land for survival remain a memory in even the most rural communities because of the encroachment of big corporations. Rituals tied to the outside land have been replaced by inside activities of watching television, playing video games, and surfing the Internet. Internet sites such as Facebook and Twitter give the illusion of connectivity, yet dissolve meaningful human ties. This lifestyle that’s reliant on technology competes with nature by creating a virtual world. If the time spent inside on the computer were exchanged for co-operative time outdoors, perhaps a more productive life could result, creating a balanced, natural state.

Wendell Berry writes about his agrarian roots and questions “How can I be responsible for what I know?”⁶ I propose that this question be directed towards society as a whole. In my experience, cultivating seeds, tending the plants that grow, and harvesting are all opportunities to discard indoor idleness and reconnect to nature. The simple act of tilling and amending the garden soil develops an exchange. This hands-on activity nurtures both the people and the landscape.

⁵ Guatarri, Félix (2000) “The Three Ecologies” New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone, p. 27

⁶ Berry, Wendell (1996) “The Unsettling America” Berkeley: University of California Press

Lippard states, “Places exist somewhere between the inside and the outside.”⁷ A garden balances between notions of in and out through an enclosed, outdoor space. While it exists in a yard outside, most often it is inside the perimeters of a private property. A garden requires attention from the people who created it and draws them to be given out from outside of from the walls of their home, yet still remains a component of domestic life. In the context of my work, the garden provided a way to create a common ground for connection. The garden allowed me to join this private group of people; In turn, I invited this community outside to a place where they could feel safely linked to the public through cooperation with and observation of the natural world.



⁷ Lippard, Lucy (2011-1-11) “People and Place: Why Ecology Matters” University of Colorado, Boulder

“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then feed just one.” ~Mother Teresa

Health of Society

Starvation is ever present throughout the world. In the United States, I see hunger as encompassing more than an empty stomach—it is a broader social issue. Nutritional deficits and mental health problems play a significant role in the starvation of our society. Obesity is more commonly seen, but this reflects the body’s hunger for a proper nutritional diet. The mind craves a stimulation that calms and feeds it in positive ways. Many of my fellow gardeners face homelessness and hunger of body and spirit. Overall, the spirit is depleted by competition and a lack of fulfillment in living. The work we share in helps to meet people’s needs for nourishment that provides for a healthier body, mind, and spirit.

Nutritional deprivation and mental illness negatively effect the collective well-being of our society. The reliance on prescription drugs is now widely accepted. Those who choose to self-medicate to fulfill their needs are viewed as weak. Challenging circumstances beyond one’s control followed by curiosity are most often the contributing factors that lead to the choice of submitting to compromised living habits.

Injection drug users look to escape the reality of the world that surrounds them. IV drugs bestow a quick fix for an escape from the harsh realities of the world in exchange for pleasure. Crack or cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines are the most common of IV drugs, all highly addictive. Using these drugs once out of mere curiosity can cause the body to feel dependent and lead to continuous use. The quickest way of administering fluids and medications throughout the body is intravenous—it is also the most deadly. Addicts self-medicate in order to manage other health problems resulting from IV drug use. Disruption in the function of major organs like the kidney, liver, heart and lungs end in serious illnesses such as HIV, Hepatitis C, Syphilis, Endocarditis, kidney failure, and Pulmonary Hyper Tension. All of these negative side effects on the human body are frequently found after extended periods of using street drugs by injection.

I address societal health issues through my artwork. Hal Foster recalls Walter Benjamin's urging of artists' "to side with the proletariat," noting that Benjamin, "urged the artist to intervene, like the revolutionary worker, in the means of artistic production - to change the "techniques" of traditional media, to transform the "apparatus" of bourgeois culture."⁸ In a similar way, I am taking action on behalf of these clients at the Harm Reduction Action Center. Even though I was the catalyst for initiating the garden, the community's voice guided our collaborative efforts. While Benjamin urged artists to side and intervene for the working class, *Windows Out* goes further by encouraging the participation of the people to be engaged in the process of creating and informing the public.

The photographic images in my light boxes document the state of health of my community members. Photographs of body parts of individuals who worked the garden are paired with a dead plant specimen; these body parts display the physical effects of IV drug use on the body in various forms. Some wounds offer evidence of fresh injection, while others display healing scar tissue. These images reflect each individual's course of life and the curing that takes place by working in the garden. Some recover, others still use. Everyone's journey is unique, however, the garden offers familiar ground that fosters recovery. An exchange takes place, as the soil is also nurtured in order for plants to grow.



There are many healthful benefits of garden work, but most importantly, fresh, nutritional produce aids in repairing the body's damaged cells. The plant veins function in the same manner as veins in the human body. Like using needles to access the bloodline in a concentrated quantity, fresh produce can have positive health effects on the blood of humans helping to counteract diseases like hyper-tension.

⁸ Foster, Hal (1996) "The Return of the Real: Avant-Garde at the End of the Century" p.302

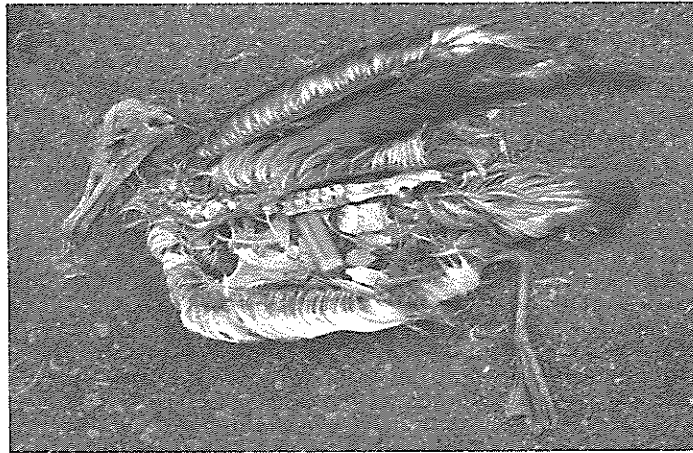
Similar to human veins, the veins of a plant work like straws sucking and absorbing nutrients needed from the soil, the sun and water. In turn, the plants return these elements to the people who grow and tend to them.

Medicinal herbs can also offer relief from symptoms such as anxiety, depression, nausea and migraines. After the summer season, cold frames were installed into the garden to extend the growing season so that herbs could be planted. The herbs were chosen for their detoxifying and rehabilitative qualities. Herbs such as lemon balm, peppermint, chamomile and lavender were planted to provide a natural alternative to drugs that help alleviate pain and discomfort of the mind and body. Clients who are “kicking it,” (the IV drug habit) and striving to become “unsick” may find the herbs beneficial.

My collaborators were often veterans, jobless, homeless, using drugs and facing major health problems; they tended to live in isolation on the fringes of society. Ironically, the political system itself is a root cause of their lack of well-being. The situation deserves greater attention because of the sacrifice these individuals made to for all Americans. Veterans have experienced dark times of war; often they return from service in a disturbed and complicated mind frame. Several soldiers who fought in the Vietnam or Afghanistan War have shared their stories with me firsthand. They became addicted to heavy drugs, such as heroin, in order to cope with the negative experience of fighting and killing. The game of war is one of control and dominance. When returning to society, veterans face lack of control in their lives and many times have weak networks of support.



My photographs expose social issues that are widely overlooked. Chris Jordan also uses photography to document and represent concerns through an activist manner of informing the public in a similar way. The photographic series *Midway: Message from Gyre* documents the stomachs of dead baby albatrosses' from Midway Atoll. These images of plastic objects within the stomachs of the carcasses reflect issues of consumerism and industrial growth.⁹



⁹ Jordan, Chris (2009) "Midway: Message from the Gyre" Photographic Series

“Artists work with questions, not the answers.” ~Lucy Lippard

Conversations with the Land

In considering the relational nature of my work, it is important to understand the role that the action of exchange entails. Without exchange the work could not exist. A combined effort by more than one person is powerful. Lending a hand to help out another person can be contagious, in turn can lead to generosity and then relationships materialize. Companionship is a human need that when fulfilled feels gratifying. A sense of gratitude provides purpose and direction.

Narratives surrounding personal histories are a significant source of establishing commonality with members of a community. Each person offers a unique story that presents a link to land use and family culture: reminiscent conversations of growing up on or around a farm or garden; family recipes; and traditions. As we till the soil, plant the seeds, tend to the plants, harvest the fruits, and build garden structures, we also engage in a conversation with the Earth.

Friere’s perspectives on dialogue align with my work goals. He says, “If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as a way by which they achieve significance as human beings.”¹⁰ He defines love as a component of this act explaining, “Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical...If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love people – I cannot enter into dialogue.”¹¹

Dialogical art requires people engaging in a spoken communication. I believe that dialogue plays an important role in forming society’s belief systems. It is a form of communication that is imperative for a unified community effort. Communication of wants verses needs drive a materialistic, self-centered way of being today. The “I” generation attempting to control nature is becoming prohibitive of a relaxed,

¹⁰ Friere, Paulo (1968) “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” Continuum Intl Pub Group p.69

¹¹ Friere, Paulo (1968) “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” Continuum Intl Pub Group pp.70-71

slower paced livelihood. Raising awareness of these differences and communicating needs with confidence pursues active understanding. As Mary Jacobs says of the HaHa's *Flood*, "Thus generosity became the medium, or methodology, and the subject or product of this project. How can we be of service to others with food and with time and what we do, the giver, get in exchange for volunteers?"¹²



Flood, by the collective artist group HaHa utilizes volunteer group methods for maintaining a hydroponic garden. This garden was dedicated to producing and distributing foods for AIDS patients. The site also served as a space for the community to gather for meetings, lectures, and special events. The Harm Reduction Action Center was already an established space for IV drug users when I arrived; it is located in a neighborhood where I had an existing connection. As with *Flood*, "One of the key reasons for their sustainability was the artist' intimate and direct knowledge of their respective neighborhoods and those living in them."¹³ Answering the community's needs has been integral to the work I have undertaken. By listening to and serving the community by example, the group became invested and took ownership of the garden.

¹² Kwon, Miwon (2002) "One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity" MIT Press p. 108

¹³ Kwon, Miwon (2002) "One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity" MIT Press p. 132



Kwon addresses these issues: “The advantage of consistent and continuous contact between the artist and the community group throughout the year allowed for greater trust among the participants, permitting improvisational and spontaneous reactions to changing circumstances around the project. Pragmatically speaking, these local artists were able to address daily problems and misunderstandings more quickly and collectively (not intermittently via long distance), better integrating the art project into the flow of the everyday life of the participants. Through such a relationship, the artists and the community groups enjoyed a greater sense of collective ownership of the project, predicated on their capacity to better control the processes of their collaboration, the unfolding development of the project, and their final public presentations.”¹⁴

Windows Out brings the community art of the Harm Reduction Action Center into the gallery of the University of Colorado Art Museum. The experience bridges my academic community with my art making community. The light box installation represents the garden experience. The intangibles created with my work: relationships, dialogue, and healing, come together in the gallery. My associatess and I display our work through physical presence and dialogue at the opening and throughout the duration of the exhibition.

¹⁴ Kwon, Miwon (2002) “One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity” MIT Press p. 134

Survival

Recognizing one's gifts is an extraordinarily compelling experience. Contributing strengths to the working system benefits the entire network. In building the light box installation, I hired Chuck, a carpenter who is a member of HRAC. Chuck is constantly looking out for his community, many of whom live together in a homeless camp. He is a survivor with a big heart and determination. Self-sufficiency and the ability to survive in adverse conditions greatly enhance the natural exchange process.



In a Creative Time interview, artist Fritz Haeg clarifies his social practice by recalling, "Buckminster Fuller believed that specialization and trades were a form of slavery instituted by 'the man' (he called them the pirates) to prevent any one person from seeing the big picture, which would be a threat to their power." This statement allows insight into the Do-It-Yourself style that is encouraging of his community garden projects Edible Estates.¹⁵



¹⁵ Haeg, Fritz (2007-7) "Interrogating Public Space" Creative Times Interview

My teammates resourcefulness taught me new approaches of collecting discarded supplies and making them useful and aesthetically pleasing. Rather than buying into the materialist system and contributing additional waste and pollution to the landfills, we took one person's trash and made it into our treasure. This remixing of resources and ability to learn from others assign an openly inventive quality to the creative process. New purpose is given to abandoned, everyday materials, which powerfully activates art practice and carries a history of meaning. The same perspective can be seen in regard to the members of the HRAC family. Within the larger scheme of life, these people have been alienated and undervalued. Our work together recognizes them as contributing, capable members of a system.



In Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he expresses, "The 'truth' is however, that the oppressed are not 'marginals,' are not people living 'outside' society. They have always been 'inside' – inside the structure which made 'beings for others.' The solution is not to 'integrate' them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves.'"¹⁶

An understanding of differences is important when working collaboratively. Kwon cites, "Political theorist Chantal Mouffe has called this conception 'a closed system of differences' wherein difference is understood as a process of continual identification/(mis)recognition and alienation/(mis)recognition intrinsic to the (self-) construction of identity and subjectivity – that is, as a complex relational process – but a series of distinct social categories that can sometimes be held together

¹⁶ Friere, Paulo (1968) "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" Continuum Intl Pub Group p.55

by a broader unifying ideal.”¹⁷ This notion holds true in the community art making process that I engaged in at the Harm Reduction Action Center. There is hope for human survival that is cohesive; responsibly embracing every fraction of the entire life structure we have created.

¹⁷ Kwon, Miwon (2002) “One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity” MIT Press p. 148

“....art heals, no need to hurry it along.” ~Claire Bishop

Healing

Research proves the therapeutic benefits of gardens¹⁸. Viewing natural scenes evokes positive feelings, reduces negative emotions, effectively holds attention and blocks or reduces stressful thoughts. The site of the Little Red House and garden are a safe haven for those who seek refuge from the hell of urban street life. Survival is a daily occurrence, but healing allows for growth.

In the book, *Live Through This: On Creativity and Self-Destruction*, bell hooks notes, “Insightfully in her work *Trauma and Recovery* Judith Herman explains: ‘Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim’s faith in a natural or divine order and cast it into a state of existential crisis.’”¹⁹ ” Hooks furthers this notion, saying, “It is the difference between healing, being cured, and learning how to cope with a chronic painful condition so that it no longer endangers one’s life. When trauma has been extreme most folks (and here I am only speaking among those of us who seek recovery) learn to constructively cope with trauma and its aftermath.....Importantly, survival is not enough, recovery enables one to thrive.”²⁰

The garden is a comfortable setting, which is conducive to reflection and conversation, which provides an opportunity to begin the recovery process. Individuals who work the community plot of land develop a sense of belonging, purpose and direction. This contrasts sharply with the alienated lifestyle that typifies Harm Reduction Action Center’s clients. Though their existence is laden with darkness, the light of their spirit shines. This light reaches out to the world as a true and genuine offering. By lending a hand in the garden, the process of healing moves forward.

¹⁸ Ulrich, Roger (November 2003) “Gardens have the potential to improve health, research shows” Science Blog

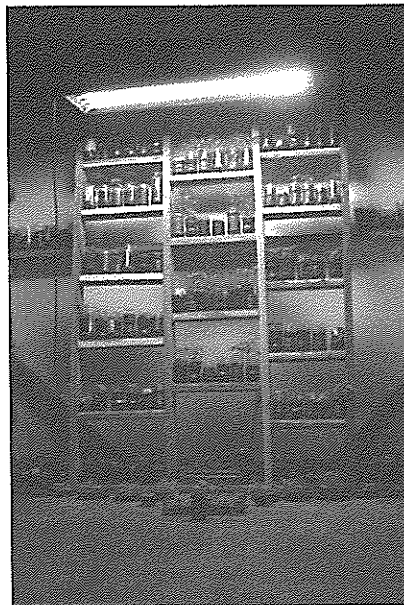
¹⁹ hooks, bell (2008) “No More Crying” in “Live Through This: On Creativity and Destruction” Seven Stories Press, pp187-188

²⁰ hooks, bell (2008) “No More Crying” in “Live Through This: On Creativity and Destruction” Seven Stories Press, pp187-188

Reflection

An isolated chair sits facing the collection of nine window light boxes in the museum installation of *Widows Out*. Each of the light boxes presents a unique arrangement of photographs and live plants. The boxes are displayed in the form of a grid leaning against the wall and support each other. The visual abundance and closeness within the space of the arrangement resembles the “Cabinets of Curiosity” in Renaissance Europe.

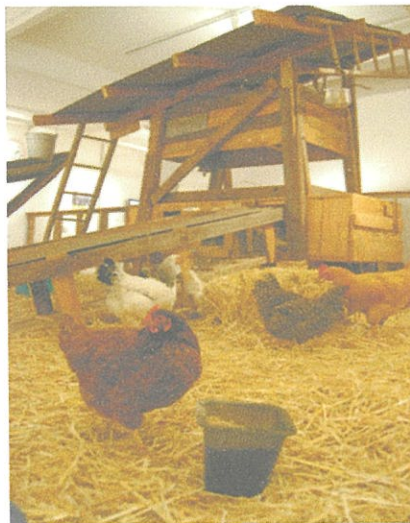
The photographic images within the panes of the windows provide an intimate view into the marred tracings of IV drug use. Each scarred image is paired with photographs of decaying plants creating connections between the plant and body parts. The documented parts reflect a common theme of fragility and death. Plants contained in recycled bottles sit within some of the boxes. The plants bloom with life and reach for the light that shines from within the boxes.



My project began by growing plants. I tended them carefully in my studio installation, which still exists today. The growth cycle of the prized seeds, seedlings and plants was glorious to watch beneath the light. Like a scientist in a lab, I observed and responded to the plant's need for water, light and air. My hands were in touch with the growing plants, even inside the studio. I brought my longing for the outdoors inside my experimental, studio space. The plants grew from a root cellar-like structure in the

cool basement of the Visual Arts Complex. The structure, a skeleton made from reclaimed lumber, sits without a skin. I made careful decisions about the materials I chose to work with in order to be considerate of the natural world.

Through my academic studies at CU Boulder, I was involved in the Baseline Group, a collective of student and faculty artists, as well as community members from other areas of expertise. My first experience with this group was the Chicken Shack Village, in which site, community, collectivity and experimentation were the vehicle by which we created chicken coops. Through collaboration with regional farmers, chicken experts and other artists we completed an installation of three hen houses. This experience provided insight and inspiration from visiting artist and architect Haiko Meijer. During our first workshops of building chicken coops, Meijer asked the group, "What can we do with these materials?" This way of thinking about materials remains with me.



During the installation of the Chicken Shack Village project, the Baseline Group was privileged to work with visiting artist Marjetica Potrc. In speaking about her work Potrc says, "Inventions that I find most inspiring are about urgent needs." Her work is consistent with this notion of creativity through the participatory designs and sustainable solutions that she makes. In her work, *Dry Toilet*, Potrc took the

concerns of the La Vega barrio of Caracas Venezuela. Since this barrio community did not have access to the municipal water grid, an ecologically safe, waterless toilet was designed fro the community.



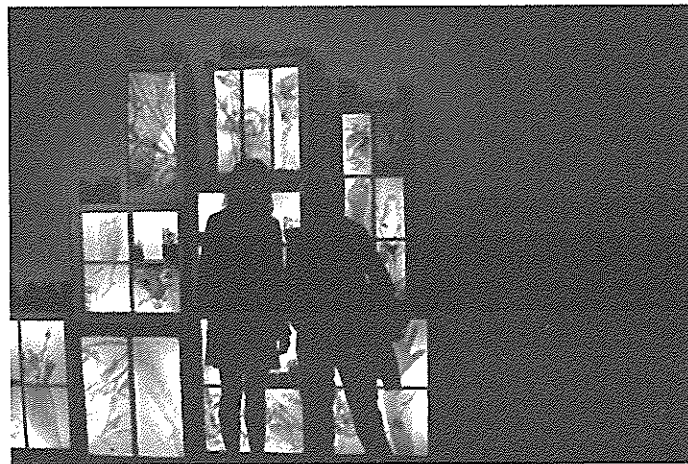
Marjetica speaks of the environmentally sound ways of barrios living, which promote community connectivity and sustainability and requires each individual to take responsibility. The resourcefulness of “slums” or alienated lifestyles presents highly inventive solutions that wider society could learn from in order to develop community connection and live in micro utopias across the land.



The use of material in *Windows Out* also recalls the inventiveness of the *Chicken Shack Village* and *Green room* by use of reclaimed lumber. *Chicken Shack Village* teaches lessons of vernacular, as both language and architecture are explored. The vernacular of the Little Red House and urban environment is present in my choice of materials and speaks to the environment and traditions represented by the work.

Most recognizable are the windows that recall that of the cold frame structures built for growing medicinal herbs through the cold season.

The windows display unique character through aged textures of bird droppings, dust, dirt, peeling paint, rust, hardware and wood. I found fence planes, which reminded me of the enclosed neighborhood setting. We used fence boards to build the light box frames. The brightness of the light varies within each windowpane, which reflects the windows of homes in the setting of the residential Red House community. I use variation within the repetitive window composition, which is consistent within the photographic opacity and layering effect.



The work is representative of the highly collaborative efforts of a number of individuals. Prior to working together in the garden and in the museum installation, Chuck expressed this desire to teach in a survey.

If you could inspire change in society, what would it be?
To be open to sharing knowledge and abilities with people.

(Chuck, 2010)

I value the lessons that working with Chuck taught me. In exchange, I paid him for his hard work. Chuck teaches through example and allows me the experience of hands-on learning. Freire describes, “one of the tasks of the educator is also to provoke the discovering of need for knowing and never to impose the knowledge whose need was not yet perceived.”²¹ He is completely invested in the cause of the art and social issues explored. In order to be used to serve the community, The Little Red House Garden is the ideal location for the final installation site of the light boxes and the green room structure. To allow greater accessibility to the community and raise further awareness of the Harm Reduction Action Center, we have discussed seeking an exhibition on Santa Fe Drive.

In order to express my gratitude for each individual involved in the collaborative process, I gave plants from the installation as I saw people in the museum setting. Each plant was hand selected to fit the individual’s request: lavender for calming; beans for eating; and cilantro to flavor food. The supportive Harm Reduction Action Center participants, volunteers and CU community were all present at the opening. Participants were enthusiastic to share in dialogue and express pride with their involvement in our work together.

Freire stated, “They wanted their affirmation,” of people involved in the Declaration of the Human Rights Group. After acknowledgment of “the problems of human rights, discrimination, racial exploitation, liberation, and freedom,” Paolo continues, “the debating started.”²² This is certainly true with working in activist modes. Politically inclined conversations, dialogue, and debate are all results of awareness towards human rights issues. In the case of the Little Red House, hidden topics of trauma, IV drug use, disease, and alienation are present points of discussion.

²¹ Friere, Paulo and Horton, Myles (1990) “We Make the Road by Walking” Temple University Press p.66

²² Friere, Paulo and Horton, Myles (1990) “We Make the Road by Walking” Temple University Press p.85



The scale of the *Windows Out* installation is large in its number of windows, but intimate from the viewer's perspective. Skin is an intimate part of the body, which reveals stories of each person included in the photographs. The intended height of the overall piece is no larger than a tall human figure. Each window requires close investigation in order to uncover the details. In witnessing the details, the installation brings meaningful consciousness to the issues presented through its images.

Both the photographs and the plants are securely contained within the window box structure. Photographs of plants, documented roots, branches, and fruit as they cycle to death, are represented in addition to the photographs of human hands and arms. The healed scars of the skin parallel the shriveling skin of leaves and fruit. The cycle of life is also present by the contrasting living green plants beside the images of scars and decay.

There is a performance involved in the daily care for plants, which is consistent throughout the entire creative process. This action continues in the museum and after the exhibition as the Red House community is eager to sustain the life of the growing garden.

Time is precious. We live in a fast paced world of plugging into technology to meet our daily needs. It takes time to make time. My committee alerted me of taking time to reflect on my work. This time allows for personal growth and space needed to fully embrace the lessons learned. I achieved a

perspective of acceptance during this personal time. The important aspects of my reflective space are freedom to think for myself, question on my own and wonder about my learning experience.

I was advised to take risks in my work. I met this challenge and understand the importance of working outside my comfort zone in order to grow as both an artist and individual. I developed a strong sense of belonging and knowing of my place within my community. As a result of this experience, I have purpose and direction as I continue my path. I feel convicted to pursue art as a form of action. I trust in my abilities to survive. These are the compelling gifts I have received through my artistic endeavors. I am empowered.

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