



// **CITY AS LIVING LABORATORY**
Sustainability Made Tangible Through the Arts

CALL // 2018 Program Report

Who We Are **CALL**



CALL // CITY AS LIVING LABORATORY's mission is to raise environmental awareness and promote the sustainable development of urban communities through the arts. Our programs are artist-facilitated; we support the unique capacity of artists to help people connect environmental challenges with personal experience and take action to find solutions that bring concrete improvements in their lives. CALL's programs succeed through interdisciplinary collaborations with scientists, urban planning experts, key community actors, and government officials. Our work is rooted in place-based experiences that foster a deeper understanding of a site's history and the natural systems, social relations, and infrastructure that sustain life. We are committed to in-depth research that measures and helps express and deepen the impact of our initiatives.

Since CALL incorporated in 2010, we have worked with over 100 artists, scientists and organizations in West Harlem, the Bronx, and Chinatown. We have also completed urban-scale projects in Indianapolis, a pilot in Lewiston, NY, and are currently developing a multi-year initiative to advance water stewardship in Milwaukee. In May 2019, we will launch a National CALL/WALKS test program in six cities across the US, lead by local Artist/Scientist teams.

Our FRAMEWORK

CALL is creating a framework for innovative and collaborative artist-led initiatives

AT CALL // CITY AS LIVING LABORATORY,

We believe that the path to meaningful action to address specific environmental challenges depends on a long-term process of building relationships with urban communities. To provide a structure and context for our collaborative process, we have formulated a flexible FRAMEWORK – an iterative series of WALKS, WORKSHOPS, and other exploratory activities that integrate informal learning, grass roots activism, artistic vision, and scientific knowledge. Our WALKS bring local residents together with artists and scientists for “traveling dialogues” that reveal the history and current conditions of a site in fresh ways to spur ideas for creative solutions. WORKSHOPS evolve from successful WALKS and support from interested stakeholders. From the WORKSHOPS, artist-led teams submit PROPOSALS for new PROJECTS that respond to the community’s most significant concerns and aspirations.

With support from the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, we are mapping the impact of our artist-led initiatives on the communities where we work. We are creating tools for engagement and have formed a national network of practitioners and institutions interested in testing the CALL’s WALKS and FRAMEWORK modeled on our artist-led process. In 2018, we coalesced partners in Baltimore, Milwaukee, New York, Pittsburgh, Santa Fe, and Washington DC to organize simultaneous WALKS in May 2019 and work with us to compile a WALK/TOOLKIT which will serve as a template for future walks.



In addition to supporting research and dissemination of CALL’s FRAMEWORK, a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation is underwriting the organization of a comprehensive public archive of Mary Miss’s artworks and project development – both realized and unrealized – as well as CALL initiatives led by other artists. The archive will provide valuable resources and models for practitioners and historians working in the arts and community development fields.

“as scientists, to be asked [by artists & designers] to use our imagination is so stimulating and motivating...”

**-Cynthia Rosenzweig
Climatologist**



CALL/BRONX

Daylighting Tibbetts Brook...



CALL's work in the Bronx focuses on helping lead an initiative to daylight Tibbetts Brook. The terminus of the 2500 acre Bronx & Westchester watershed, Tibbetts Brook has been routed into the Broadway combined sewer for over 100 years, sending up to five million gallons of clean water to the Wards Island water treatment plant daily. During increasingly heavy rain falls, the combined sewers overflow (CSOs), sending waste directly into the Harlem River. These overflows are the largest source of pollution into the Harlem River and impact the entire NY Harbor. Since 2012 CALL has conducted a series of artist-led explorations and initiatives to advance a strategy to 'daylight' Tibbetts Brook, addressing both CSOs and other local environmental challenges by creating a linear park from Van Cortland Lake to the Harlem River along a two-mile stretch of an abandoned CSX railbed.

In 2018 CALL commissioned projects by SLO Architecture and Bob Braine to support the daylighting movement. CALL kicked off these efforts in April at Herald Square as part of Car-Free Earth Day. Artist Bob Braine presented the first iteration of his *Estuary Tattoos* in an all-day body painting event, joined by urban explorer Steven Duncan who engaged the public in discussions on NYC sewers and the benefits of daylighting. A few months later, CALL's official launch of SLO's *Finding Tibbetts 2.0* and Braine's *Estuary Tattoos* at Van Cortlandt Park sparked discussions about daylighting initiatives among local stakeholders and was featured in articles in the Riverdale press and Untapped Cities.

Finding Tibbetts 2.0 and *Estuary Tattoos* visited four Bronx locations where the community gathered with experts to learn about the Tibbetts as well as the geology and ecological history of the neighborhood. Program partners, including Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, The Bronx Counsel on Environmental Quality, The NYC Departments of Parks and Planning, and Steve Duncan on behalf of NYCH2O provided information to the community on the impact of the project. CALL also invited the Environmental Performance Agency (EPA), which choreographed a movement work searching for the history of the brook along the paved-over streets and gardens of Marble Hill. At these events, CALL collected over 300 signatures to support the daylighting effort. In 2019 – 2020 CALL is planning a thought-provoking series of interactive WALKS and focused WORKSHOPS to collect stories and aspirations to formulate an inclusive and imaginative vision for the proposed new park.

“Connecting the corporal to the outer world using the medium and idea of tattoos is a way to bring consciousness and pride in the legacy of the territory where we live.”

-Bob Braine
Artist



OGGRAMS CALL/ CHINATOWN

Connecting Human Culture and Horticulture



In Chinatown, CALL is busy investigating and testing out four artist/scientist proposals that emerged from our 2017 Chinatown WORKSHOP. Each potential PROJECT addresses aspects of the community's stated concerns including: the lack of green space, persistent air pollution, sustainable secure housing, and cultural preservation and transmission.

In June 2018, Artist Jean Shin and Traditional Chinese Medicine expert Donna Mah conducted a workshop with local Asian-American youth at Wing on Wo exploring the use of medicinal herbs. Participants made self-watering planters from recycled bottles for the cultivation of these herbs. This workshop was a prototype for *Take Root*, a larger-scale initiative that Shin has proposed. *Take Root* aims to help preserve and promote traditional medicine while building awareness of the scourge of single-use plastic containers on and the marginalized subculture of "canners" underpinning the NYC bottle and can redemption processes.

The following week, Mary Ting and Donna Mah presented a workshop with enthusiastic senior citizens at the Educational Alliance on the cultivation and therapeutic value of traditional culinary herbs. The workshop participants helped plant a large garden on the roof deck of the Alliance and took home plants for their own homes.

Towards the end of the month, on a WALK in the heart of Chinatown architect Joyce Hwang and environmental engineer Prathap Ramamurthy used heat imaging technology to decode environmental conditions such as heat loss and retention in rent-controlled buildings in Chinatown. The WALK was followed by a forum about the challenges and promise of Community Land Trusts to preserve low-cost housing and reflect on how the arts could be a catalyst to reveal the benefits of strategic renovations to energy conservation and livability.



In the fall, Stephan Fan and Valerie Imbruce began to work with CALL to further develop *Designing Chinatown's Food Systems*, an initiative seeking to reveal the relative sustainability of Chinatown's food systems in contrast to the industrial scale farms that supply conventional super markets. Fan and Imbruce will kick off research in May 2019 with a WALK and conversation with vendors in Chinatown and expand their inquiry to farmers in New Jersey that grow for Chinese grocers later this summer.

"Addressing the social, cultural and environmental concerns, the project speaks to Chinatown as a place of ancient wisdom, health and resilience..."

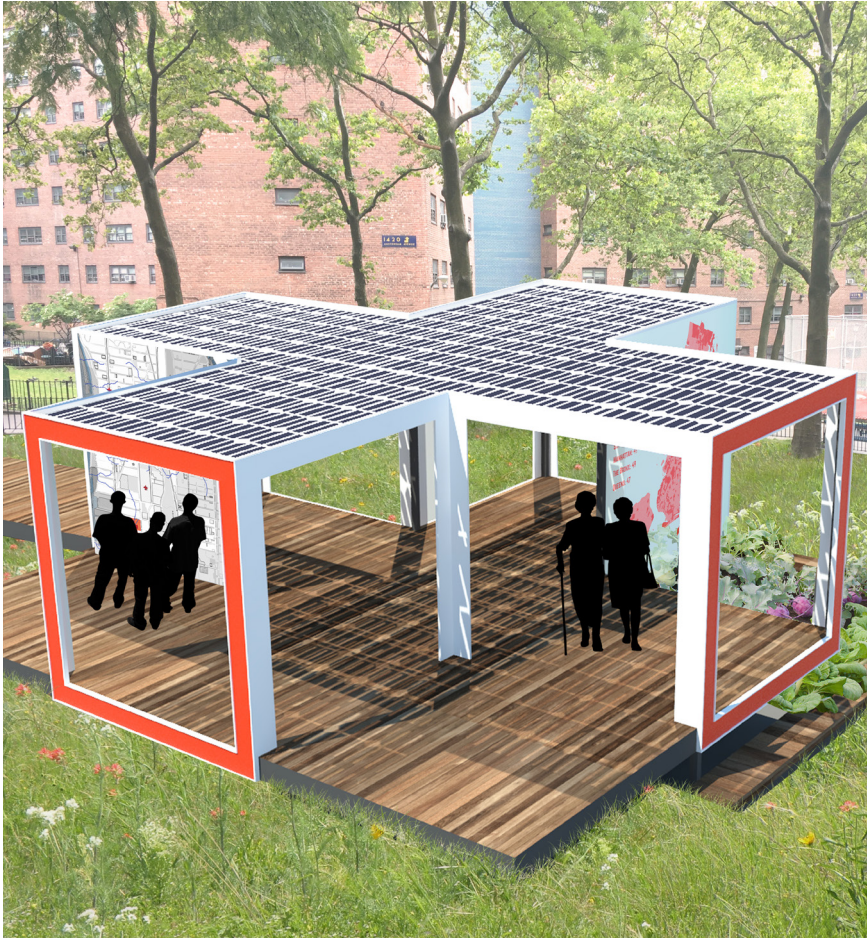
-Jean Shin
Artist



CALL/HARLEM

RESILIENCE & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

CALL'S engagements in Harlem have been driven by the community



In 2018, CALL continued the process of considering resiliency design in Harlem and working with the local community to create a space for preparedness engagement. In January, at the Broadway Housing Communities, landscape architect/urban planner Elliott Maltby of thread collective participated in a forum with Founding Director Peggy Sheppard and Community Organizer Louis Bailey both of WE ACT for Environmental Justice. The discussion centered on the pressing need for urban emergency preparedness for vulnerable communities. The presentation covered the community-driven design-development process guiding Maltby's proposal for a structure in the Manhattanville Houses to serve as a multi-purpose community hub, which will transform into a central resource for information and support during emergencies. The discussion highlighted the role of arts and design as a catalyst to strengthen community resilience.

As CALL and WE ACT seek support to construct the HUB, we are drafting a operations and program plan.

“Social resilience is critical for a community facing disaster. This project is both ecological and social - a connector of people and ideas.”

-Elliott Maltby
Landscape Architect



OGRAMS CALL/ MILWAUKEE

WaterMarks, CALL's Milwaukee-based project creating an atlas of the city's water systems, gathers steam.



WaterMarks is an initiative to develop an inclusive and urban-scaled project for the city of Milwaukee, designed to help its citizens better understand their relationships to the water systems and infrastructure that support that support their lives. This is envisioned as a multi-layered framework that can be implemented over time.

In November 2018 the first WaterMarker was installed at the Acosta Middle School. The installation of this marker was the culmination of a year of WALKS, WORKSHOPS, and lessons that began a year earlier with a walk led by engineer Justin Hegarty and artist Jill Sebastian through Walker's Square to the Burnham Canal. In March 2018, biochemist Carmen Aguilar and artist Melanie Ariens led a walk into the Harbor District to the School of Freshwater Sciences; and in April 2018, engineer Paige Peters with artist Colin Matthes led a walk along National Avenue and to Paliafito Eco-Arts Park.

These WALKS provided the foundation for a WORKSHOP where the Acosta School students selected the letter "A" to stand for: Acosta, Agua, and grade 'A' excellence – a fitting choice for a first letter! From recording students' "water stories", to neighborhood investigations, WATERMARKS exemplifies the multi-disciplinary, multi-ethnic and multi-generational approach that CALL aims to model.

This letter is the first in a city-wide atlas of markers conceived to alert citizens of climate conditions impacting water resources. This early stage of the project was supported by an Activating Community Opportunities grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to Marquette University's Haggerty Museum of Art.



"To empower students to believe in themselves, to think about their actions and their ability to change the world... that's the power of teaching."

**-Shannon Olson
Science Teacher, Acosta**





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