

the TRINITY RIVER PROJECT

Presented by URBANO, a public art initiative supported by the

LILIANA BLOCH GALLERY

October 10 - December 31, 2016

Dallas, Texas

INTRODUCTION : What is the TRINITY RIVER PROJECT



View from the floodway, 6 miles west of downtown Dallas. River greenbelt on the left, levee on the right, 2016 (Photo: Laray Polk)

Gallerist Liliana Bloch boarded a plane for Kassel, Germany, in 2012. The occasion was Documenta (13), an exhibition known by artists and curators as one of the most provocative and challenging in the world. It's a sprawling citywide event that only occurs every five years, with about a hundred participating artists from numerous countries. And unlike art fairs or other events on this scale, it's a non-selling exhibition that lasts for 100 days.

It was her first visit to the city located on the Fulda River, and in preparation, Bloch read everything she could get her hands on: curatorial essays, books on the participating artists, pamphlets listing special presentations. It was during this daily reading exercise that she came across an artist named Marcos Lutyens. He had built a "Reflection Room" where "Hypnotic Sessions" were offered.

She was at once skeptical and curious. "Coming from Latin America," Bloch says, "anything super esoteric, that goes beyond reason, I'm kind of attracted to it." She signed up for a Hypnotic Session, but would hold on to her doubt for at least five minutes into the session.

"I'll never forget Marcos talking about magnetic fields, and the semi-conscious state I entered." The experience led her to make an introduction afterward. He was easy going, she says, and within minutes they slipped into speaking Spanish (his mother is from Spain). Not only was he open-minded in his art practice, cross-pollinating art and science, but he was able to convey that openness to attendees, she says.

When she returned to Dallas, where her gallery is based, Bloch thought of ways she might invite Marcos here. He often collaborates with others (especially on issues of climate disruption), so she contacted me, and, in turn, I contacted Marcos. It didn't take long for us to strike up a friendship and get to work using Skype and email (some of the time he's in Los Angeles, and other times in Barcelona).

We eventually agreed collaborate on a project about water, specifically the Trinity. "Rivers are the lifeblood of the landscape," Lutyens says, "just as circulatory systems map themselves throughout the body." His project in Kassel, where he first met Bloch, also took place near a river, with an added twist: "Live World War II bombs were discovered in the muddy banks while I was carrying out my sessions. History always finds itself layered along the banks of a river, and the Trinity is no exception."

The project we came up with was pitched to Tim Rogers and he amicably agreed to be our publishing partner. That's the backstory, and without further delay, from Kassel to Dallas, and all points in between, we present: The Trinity River Project.

- Laray Polk

The TRINITY RIVER PROJECT is a story told through journalism, performance, and the visual arts. There are three parts to the project.

Part ONE - Essays.

Ten essays were published daily for two weeks on FrontBurner starting on October 10 and concluding Oct 21.

Part TWO - Guided Meditation.

There was a guided meditation led by Marcos Lutyens on Saturday, October 22 along the old river channel across from the gallery.

Part THREE - Exhibition.

The *Trinity River Project*, a collaborative exhibition between Laray Polk and Marcos Lutyens will open at the Liliana Bloch Gallery from November 19 to December 20. Artifacts from both the written and participatory portions of the project will be on display.

Continue Reading - *The Trinity Project: Intro* – Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 10, 2016.

Part ONE -

the ESSAYS

By Laray Polk

The Ancestors

Essay 1 of 10



Samuel B. Pryor, physician and first mayor of Dallas (1856-57). Pryor is one of six 19th-century Dallas mayors buried at Pioneer Cemetery.

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 10, 2016 8:32 AM

“In the mid- to late-1800s in Dallas, if you were a Freemason or an Odd Fellow, chances were good that when you passed, your body would be interred at a specially designated plot alongside your brethren. If you were married and had children, they could come, too.

Some of these gravesites still exist, many with their original headstones, at a public park called Pioneer Cemetery, a quiet, shaded spot located at Young and Marilla streets, near City Hall. The historically significant site is easy to overlook. It’s modest, while the structures surrounding it, a bronze re-enactment of a cattle drive and the sprawling Convention Center, are not.

The land initially owned by the Masonic Fraternity and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows had been strategically selected for its elevation and distance from the Trinity River. Even in the early throes of becoming a modern city, planners worried about the river’s propensity to take back human endeavor, including cemeteries.”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: The Ancestors – Laray Polk, Oct 10, 2016](#)

More About Bones

Essay 2 of 10



Dr. Ellis W. Shuler excavating a mammoth skull in Dallas, ca. 1934.

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 11, 2016 8:35 AM

“My questions, then as now, are basic: what kinds of animal roamed the area now known as the Great Trinity Forest? What kinds of plants and trees were present? What was the climate like? How was the Trinity River floodplain formed?”

Answers to these questions can be supplied in part because there’s a fossil record, thanks to the efforts of Winkler, Slaughter, and Ellis W. Shuler, the person for whom the museum is named. Shuler was hired by SMU in 1915, the year it opened, to teach geology and related courses. He served as head of the Geology Department and Dean of Graduate Studies until his retirement, in 1953.”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: More About Bones - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 11, 2016.](#)

The Shape of Time

Essay 3 of 10



Charles Allen leaves his canoe to examine rocks and shells along the Trinity River, 2012 (Photo: Laray Polk).

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 12, 2016 8:49 AM

“In August 2001, Charles Allen found a partial skeleton along the banks of the Trinity River, near the boat ramp at South Loop 12. Allen, a master canoeist who is perhaps more at home on water than land, called archeologist Tim Dalbey to come take a look.

The next day, Dalbey verified what had been found were human skeletal remains of a female “from a burial eroding from the bank on the site.” The skull, he says, was partially covered in red ochre. Later he would take a bone sample from a rib and send it off for carbon dating. Test results showed the remains to be about 1,000 years old.

No one knows for sure where those bones are now, maybe in a brown box in an evidence room somewhere. That’s because when Allen and Dalbey returned the third day, Dallas policemen were on premises, removing the skeleton. The DPD took the remains to the coroner’s office, where Dalbey was allowed a couple of hours to conduct analysis and collect a sample.”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: The Shape of Time - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 12, 2016.](#)

The Gravel Belt

Essay 4 of 10



West Dallas landfill on the right with levee in the background at the intersection of S. Walton Walker (Loop 12) and Singleton boulevards, 2016. During the Superfund cleanup of the RSR lead smelter, exposed slag and battery metals at the site were covered with a 2-foot protective cap (Photo: Laray Polk).

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 13, 2016 8:25 AM

“Dealers report they have all the business they can care for and all gravel pits in the vicinity of Dallas are being worked to full capacity,’ trade journal Pit and Quarry reported in 1921. That year, the city was constructing 30 miles of hard-surfaced highway called ‘the belt line,’ meant to encircle the city and join all the cardinal highways ‘as the spokes of a wheel from a hub.’The cost: \$6,000 a mile.

The original Belt Line Road is a bargain when compared to the cost of the proposed Trinity toll road. The 9-mile stretch is projected to cost \$167 million a mile. While the two projects are separated by almost 100 years, they tell a similar story about the hidden costs of building a modern city.”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: The Gravel Belt - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 13, 2016.](#)

Snags, Strainers, and Manmade Obstacles

Essay 5 of 10



Charles Allen canoeing down the Trinity River, 2012 (Photo: Laray Polk)

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 14, 2016 8:05 AM

“In February 2000, Charles Allen set out alone in a canoe stocked with provisions. He put in upstream of the West Fork and Elm Fork confluence of the Trinity River. He had no timetable and only two goals: reach the sea, come back alive.

The Trinity River, the longest self-contained river in the state, flows north to south as elevation dictates, and the distance from source to coastal destination is 710 miles. It would take several months for Allen to reach the mouth of the river, where brackish water mixes with saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico. Some canoeists, says Allen, could make the trip in less time, but he has always been a slow paddler and puts a high premium on the ability to see downstream. “There are many isolated passages along the river, and many risks.” Snags, strainers, and manmade obstacles, he says, create deadly hazards that need to be seen in advance, so he didn’t paddle at night. To have full visibility, he would set up camp along the river before sunset and get started soon after sunrise.

A brief encounter with a 12-foot alligator as he neared coastal waters was not a big deal relative to other threats. He says some of those threats are manmade, such as abandoned pipe and metal; others are the consequence of natural processes like sizable trees calving from the bank, at times floating with the current and, at other times, floating perpendicular to it. Of the latter type of hazard, a tree can become what’s called a strainer. While water, debris, and even aquatic life can pass through the blockage, or even join with it, a boat cannot. A collision with a strainer can jettison passengers and destroy a canoe.”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: Snags, Strainers, and Manmade Obstacles - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 14, 2016.](#)

Fighting for Open Space

Essay 6 of 10



Ned Fritz, 1970 (Photo: Gary Barnett)

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 17, 2016 9:55 AM

“Our Parks Department can’t find anything named after Ned Fritz. There is a Fretz Park in Dallas, but that was named after a former Park Board member,” wrote city spokesperson Richard Hill in response to an email inquiry. As far as streets, he said, there’s one. ‘We have no record as to why it was named Fritz and no records of any other streets named Fritz or Ned Fritz.’

The reason there are no parks or streets in the city of Dallas named for Fritz is a question that mostly answers itself. He was a lawyer, communicator, organizer, and conservationist. He saved land from highway development and forests from a barge canal. According to community health advocate and environmentalist Jim Schermbeck: ‘Without Ned Fritz, we might be looking at one long industrial ship channel from South Dallas to Houston. Without him, we might not have a Big Thicket forest, or at least not one as large.’ One of his most enduring legacies, Schermbeck says, ‘is the idea that citizens themselves should be the decision makers in what resources are sacrificed and for what purposes, and which ones are preserved for the future. That’s still a very radical notion when put into practice.’ An especially radical idea in Texas, he says, in the 1960s and ’70s, ‘when Fritz was advocating for open spaces for their own sake.’

The Great Trinity Forest is one of those open spaces Fritz fought for and managed to save. Saving the forest in this instance means that people in 17 counties — including Tarrant, Dallas, and others downriver — went to the ballot box on March 13, 1973, and voted against bonds for canalizing the Trinity. That stopped the prospect of clearcutting along the river, which in turn saved the forest. And because the majority of voters were not interested in financing the barge canal, it meant the federal government wouldn’t subsidize the project to the tune of \$1.6 billion.”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: Fighting for Open Space - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 17, 2016.](#)

Q&A With a Monarch Warrior

Essay 7 of 10



Butterflies and moths have four stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Caterpillars are the larval stage of the life cycle (Photo: Laray Polk)

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 18, 2016 8:11 AM

“Growing up Becky Rader was sure of two things. She wanted to study science, and she wanted to spend as much time as possible outdoors. It’s not surprising, then, that she became a wildlife biologist, educator, and naturalist. Rader, along with others whom she refers to as “the great tribe,” has spent countless volunteer hours in the Great Trinity Forest, working to preserve Big Spring.

She has visited the Trinity forest since childhood, first on outings with her family, then as an adult, trekking occasionally with Genie and Ned Fritz. Those walks often included people who would go on to become Master Naturalists, like Jim Flood.

Being connected to nature, she says, is not a passive activity. And that connection has been made all the more challenging to secure because of construction projects in the area like the Texas Horse Park and the Trinity Forest Golf Club. She and others do what they can to minimize destruction and colossal missteps, usually at the hands of the city and contractors. But, she says, ‘We can’t be everywhere in the forest at all times.’ It’s not enough to care for nature. She says, ‘It takes people who care enough to speak out and protect it.’”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: Q&A With a Monarch Warrior - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 18, 2016.](#)

Paths, Springs, and Roaming Rights

Essay 8 of 10



In 1840 there were at least 21 known natural springs, both artesian and fissure, in the Dallas area. The waterworks pictured is not one of them; it's an artifice that uses a circulation pump to replenish flow, located next to Pioneer Cemetery in downtown Dallas, 2016 (Photo: Laray Polk).

“Water is essential to maintaining life, and, throughout time, people have thrived wherever there is an abundant source of clean water. One of those sources is natural springs, and springs fed by underground reservoirs once played a major role in Texas. Since at least 30,000 years ago, in the geographical area now called a state, indigenous peoples made use of natural springs, their location connected by a circuit of paths. “When European explorers entered the picture,” wrote geologist Gunnar Brune in 1975, “Indians guided them over well-worn trails from one spring to another.”

That introduction would signal an eventual demise of almost all of the 281 major and historical springs recorded by Brune. It wasn't due to the most recent inhabitants' lack of understanding of the importance of springs. As Brune wrote: “Many springs afforded important stops on stagecoach routes, power for mills, water for medicinal treatment, municipal water supplies, and recreational parks.” Rather, decline is attributable to land-use practices that over time reduced the pressure that drives natural springs upward — practices such as clearcutting, pasturing livestock, well drilling, and overpumping. In other words, the settlers compromised the land surrounding the water table that feeds a given spring.”

...

“The Great Slaughter’ of the southern buffalo herd began in the early 1870s, and by 1878, hunters like J. Wright Mooar, who operated in the Panhandle, had almost wiped out the species. It's reported that he killed 20,000 buffalo in his lifetime, including a rare white one; he is also credited with starting the buffalo-hide industry when he sent skins to his brother in New York City. Railroads played a role in the expedited killing. Not only did rail offer a more efficient means of shipping skins greater distances, it also meant more buffalo could be shot at a time. Railroads offered passengers the opportunity to shoot buffalo from the open windows of slow-moving trains, leaving the bodies to rot in the landscape. The latter activity also kept buffalo off the tracks.”

Characteristics of a River

Essay 9 of 10



Confluence of the West Fork and Elm Fork located 6 miles west of downtown Dallas, 2016
(Photo: Laray Polk)

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 20, 2016 8:35 AM

“Though it often appears narrow and sluggish, the Trinity River is a workhorse. It is a complete ecosystem that needs little from people other than not getting in its way as it works to deliver water to the sea, 710 miles away. But people have gotten in its way, and a modern city has grown up around its shores and ancient floodplains. Levees have been built, rebuilt, and, from 1928 to 1931, the city removed the river’s natural meanders in advance of the promise of a barge canal. The river was not only straightened, it was moved a half a mile or more to the west.

Moving the channel from its natural course, it was positioned farther from downtown and closer to communities of color. Jim Schermbeck, a community organizer who played an instrumental role in pushing for lead cleanup in West Dallas, says those areas west and south of the river are ‘where all the lead smelters were located; it’s where all the landfills are; and it’s where all the metal shops, junkyards, and chemical depots went.’

Here’s another stark fact: in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, severe flooding was recorded in 1822, 1841, 1844, 1866, 1871, 1889, 1890, 1908, 1922, 1942, 1949, 1989, 1990, 1991, and 2015. The flood in 1908 prompted the city of Dallas to hire Missouri-based George E. Kessler, a landscape architect, to come up with a citywide plan that included levees, freight terminals, parks, a civic center, a belt railroad, and more. ‘The Trinity River,’ Kessler remarked, ‘is the biggest problem you have in Dallas.’”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: Characteristics of a River - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 20, 2016.](#)

Epilogue (Where Are We Going?)

Essay 10 of 10



Borrow Area A is located at the western end of Elam Road, adjacent to the Trinity Forest Golf Club. To the left of the central road, one truck can be seen operating a dragline, and another, hauling excavated materials offsite. More recent aerial photos show the pit full of water. (Image: Google Maps)

BY LARAY POLK PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER OCTOBER 21, 2016 9:22 AM

“Lingering questions in regard to the hydrology of both sites, says Sandifer, could be resolved quickly with dyes or isotope tracers, but to his knowledge those kinds of tests haven’t been done. Sandifer, it should be noted, is a member of the Texas Stream Team — a group of trained volunteers who gather information about the natural resources of the state. Sandifer and others — Richard Grayson, Alexander Neal, Carrie Robinson — sample and analyze the water at Big Spring at regular intervals and post data on a public site. They’re monitoring closely for changes in flow, but so far there’s been nothing alarming, other than spikes in E. coli.

It should be clear at this point of the telling that many people who spend time in the Great Trinity Forest, and those who float down the Trinity River and its tributaries in canoes, are highly competent people. It’s possible the city is too much of any unwieldy bureaucracy to handle this area with the care that is needed. The ecology of this place is in the throes of transformation; we will either have our park or we will destroy the possibility of it at the hands of our unchecked, destructive impulses.”

[Continue Reading - The Trinity Project: Epilogue \(Where Are We Going?\) - Laray Polk, DMagazine, Oct 21, 2016.](#)

Part TWO -
the GUIDED MEDITATION

By Marcos Lutyens

On October 22nd, patrons were invited to participate in the second URBANO public art program entitled the TRINITY RIVER PROJECT by Marcos Lutyens and Laray Polk. As collaborators, Lutyens and Polk seek to provide an opportunity for the viewer (as reader and contemplator) to become uprooted in their perceptions of the Trinity River, then re-rooted in the spirit of new possibilities. Polk wrote a series of journalistic articles related to the Trinity River which lead up to a guided meditation at an outdoor location along the Trinity River conducted by Lutyens. At the beginning of the meditation, Lutyens asked for one volunteer to select a stone from a bag. Ten stones were marked individually by a color, the color representing the path the meditation will go on, corresponding to one of Polk's 10 essays. Instead of choosing blindly, Lutyens encouraged the patron to select the color through synaesthesia, by physically feeling for color rather than visually. Once the stone was selected, Lutyens referred to their book of visual maps that were relevant to each color/essay/experience. They used the visual maps to guide participants as a collective unconscious for the next hour. Lutyens led each group through different spaces and time periods in a hypnotic state allowing everyone to have their own personal experiences, but collectively interacting with the Trinity River. Lutyens led 3 different meditations along with a closing ceremony of recording the environment with clay pressings and silhouettes of participants out of bird seeds by giving back to the Trinity River and to all of its inhabitants.



Ten induction stones that each correspond to a different meditation; a participant volunteered to choose a stone from the bag before the meditation began.



Image: Marcos Lutyens sketchbook open to "The Ancestors" with corresponding induction stone.



Image: Marcos Lutyens sketchbook open to "The Shape of Time" with corresponding induction stone.



Image: Marcos Lutyens sketchbook open to "The Gravel Belt" with corresponding induction stone.



Image: Marcos Lutyens sketchbook open to "Epilogue (Where are we going?)" with corresponding induction stone.



Detail of the study, "Monarch Warrior"



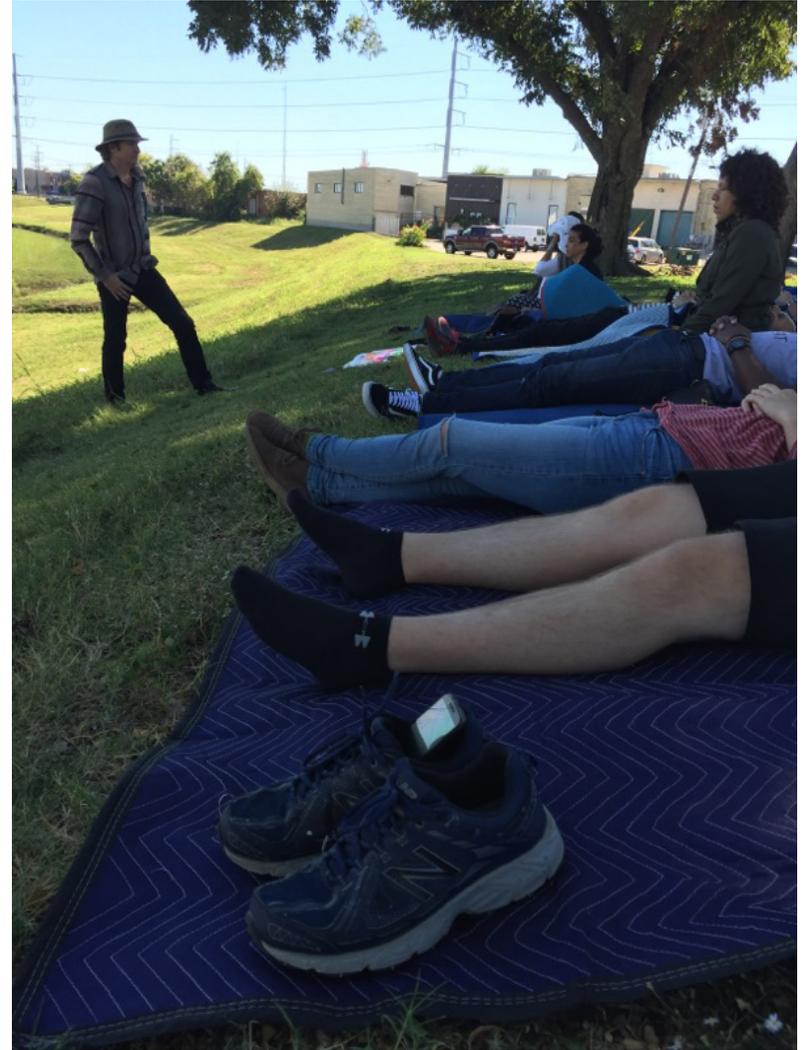
Detail of the study, "Monarch Warrior"



Detail of the study, "The Gravel Belt"



Detail of the study, "More About Bones"



On the left, Marcos leads one of the sessions on the banks of the Trinity River. On the right, the group is in mid-discussion on what they experienced during the meditation. About forty people experienced the meditation split between three sessions each lasting about an hour.



After the final meditation, participants were invited to partake in a closing ceremony allowing the meditations to leave a positive remnant both in the minds of those involved as well as on the banks of the Trinity. They were asked to lie down and then their silhouette was traced with a mixture of birdseed and high quality dog food which provided sustenance for both the birds and the crows that call that area home.

Part THREE -

the EXHIBITION

Marcos Lutyens and Laray Polk

The TRINITY RIVER PROJECT exhibition comes as a culmination of a story told through journalism, performance, and the visual arts. The project started on October 10 with ten essays by Laray Polk published daily for two weeks on D Magazine's Nature and Environment section FrontBurner. On October 22, Marcos Lutyens led three guided meditation on a location along the old river channel, finishing the second stage of the program, which was conceived under URBANO, the gallery's public art program launched in 2016.

Opening in November 19, the Trinity River Project will be an archival site-specific exhibition of artifacts from both the written and participatory portions of the project. Recounted in its introductory essay, Polk shares with us how the Trinity River became a vision of metaphysical resonance as a creative departure: We eventually agreed collaborate on a project about water, specifically the Trinity. "Rivers are the lifeblood of the landscape," Lutyens says, "just as circulatory systems map themselves throughout the body." His project in Kassel, where he first met Bloch, also took place near a river, with an added twist: "Live World War II bombs were discovered in the muddy banks while I was carrying out my sessions. History always finds itself layered along the banks of a river, and the Trinity is no exception."



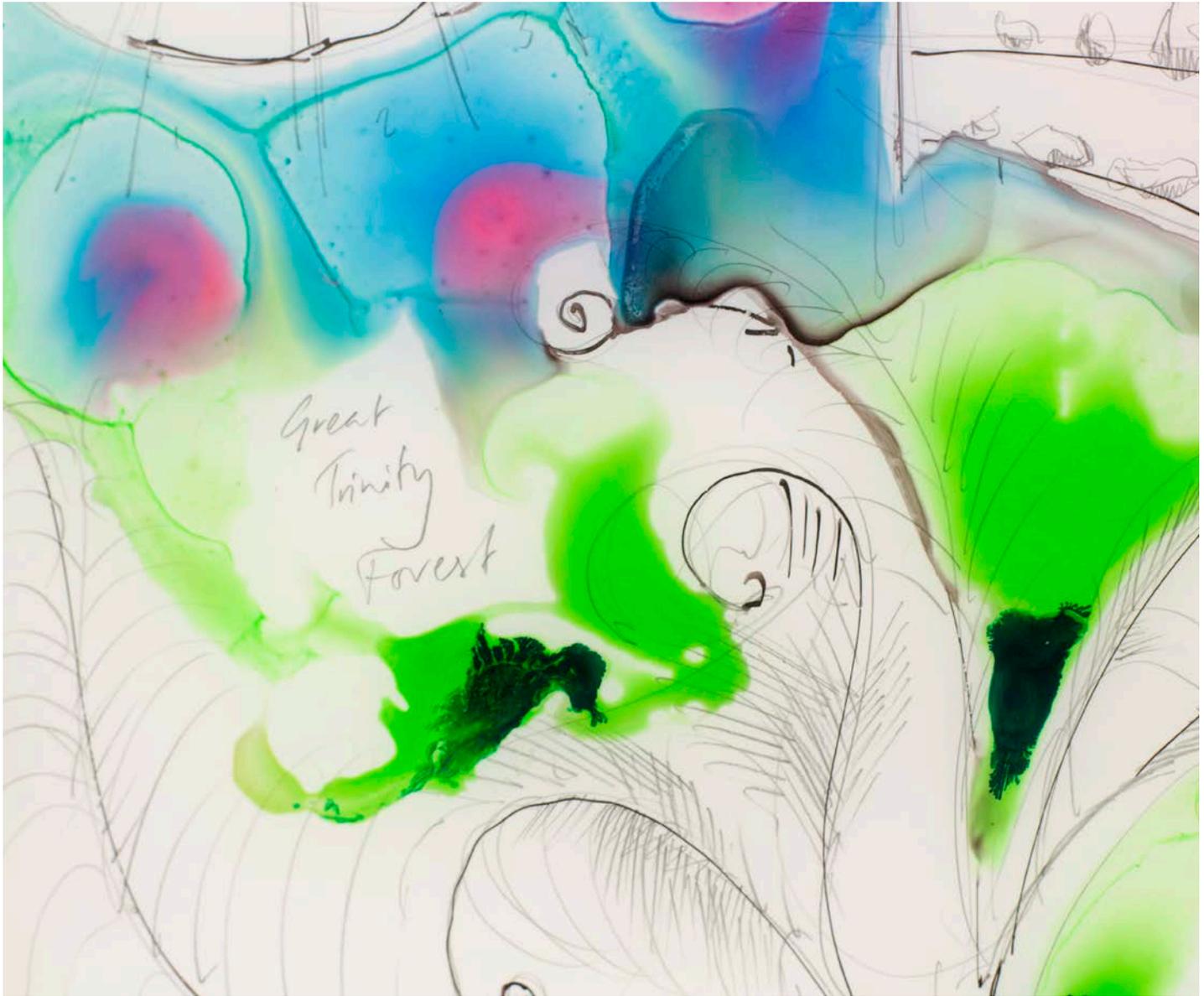
Marcos Lutyens, *Epilogue: Where are we going?*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



Epilogue: Where are we going?, detail



Marcos Lutyens, *More about Bones*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



More about Bones, detail



Marcos Lutyens, *The Shape of Time*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



The Shape of Time, detail



Marcos Lutyens, *The Gravel Belt*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



The Gravel Belt, detail



Marcos Lutyens, *Snags, Strainers and Man Made Obstacles*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



Snags, Strainers and Man Made Obstacles, detail



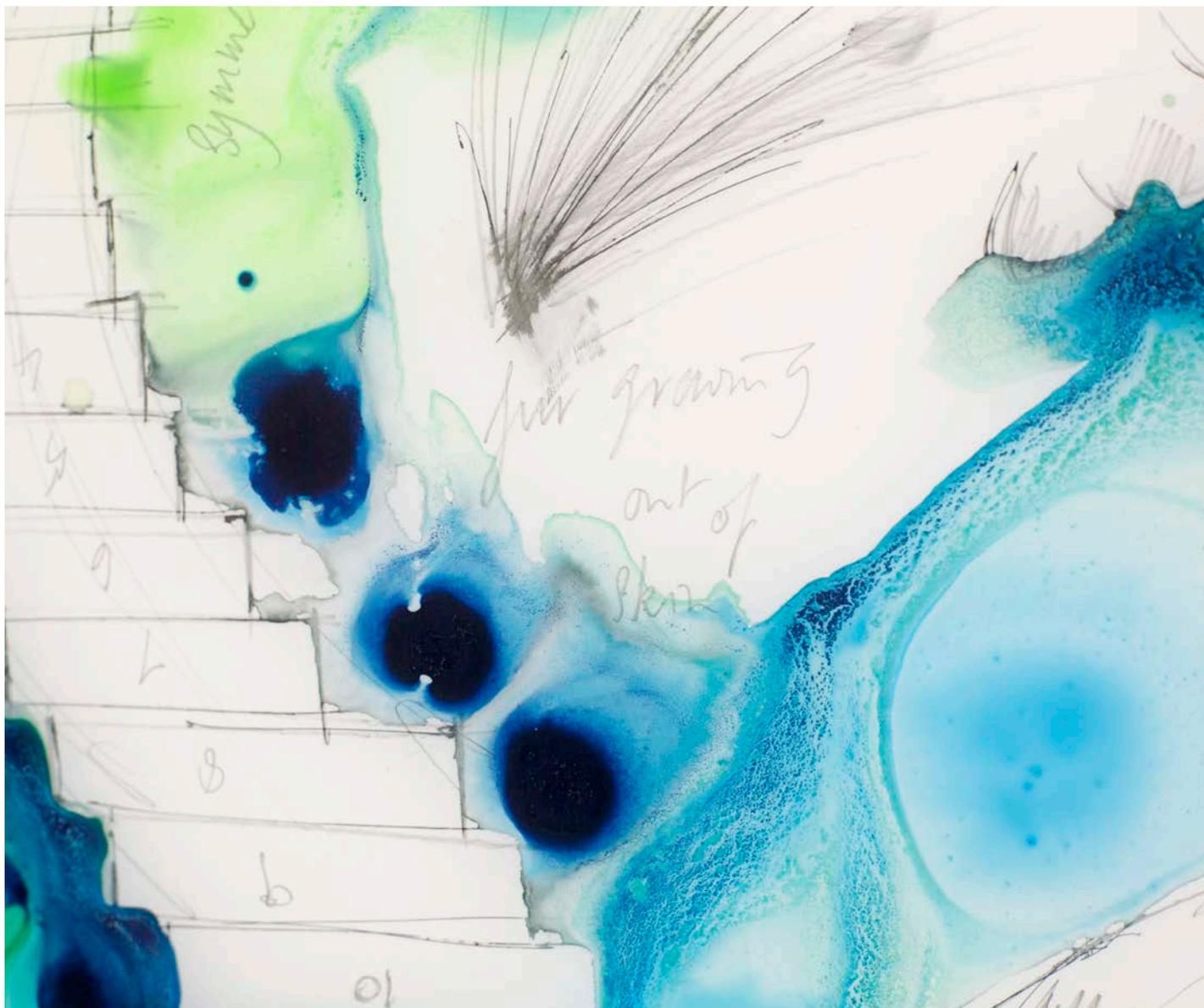
Marcos Lutyens, *Fighting for Open Space*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



Fighting for Open Space, detail



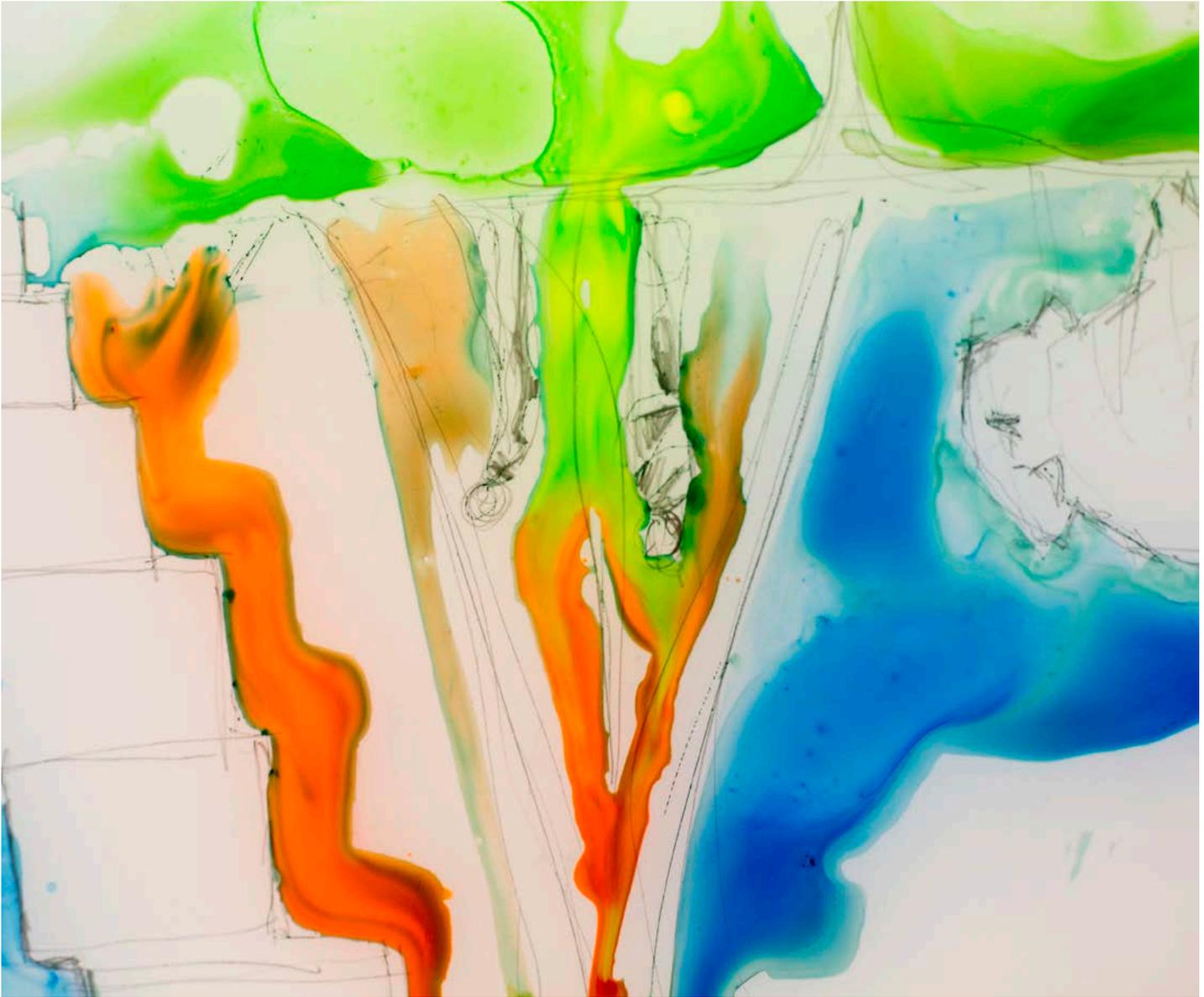
Marcos Lutyens, *The Monarch Warrior*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



The Monarch Warrior, detail



Marcos Lutyens, *Paths, Springs and Roaming Rights*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



Paths, Springs and Roaming Rights, detail



Marcos Lutyens, *The Ancestors*, 2016, 20" x 25", water color, pencil, ink on dura-lar



The Ancestors, detail

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