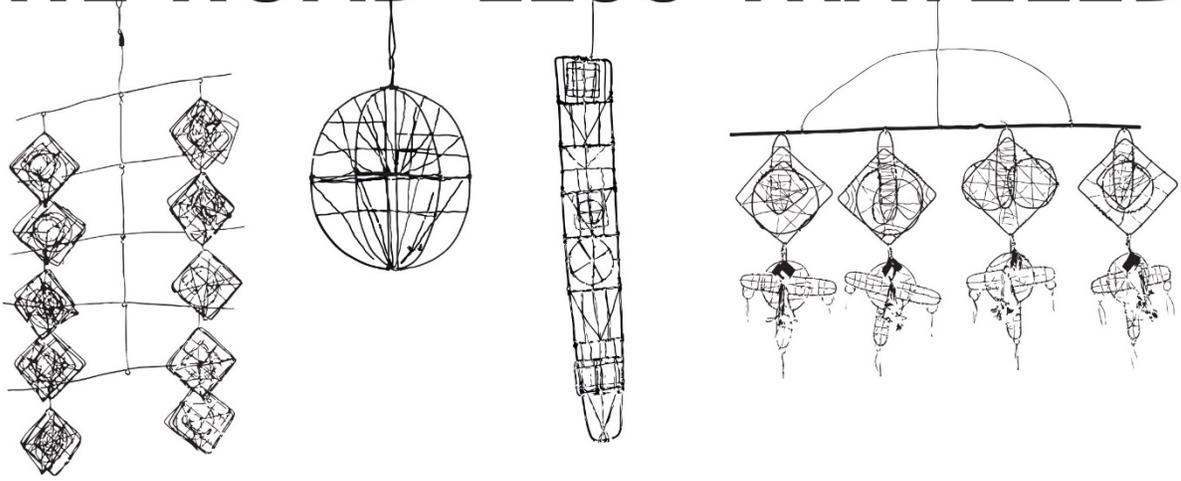


# THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED



Sheboygan, WI      September 27-29, 2017

## Fueling Station Session

Penny Duff:

My name is Penny Duff. I'm based in Galien, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois. My work is grounded in a desire to animate vernacular spaces with creative practices in critical inquiry. This is a work that I've been thinking about a lot over the years. It's always been very informed by place and I currently find myself living in environments, it's very different from anything I've ever lived before. It's a very unique opportunity for me to think about talking about this work, which feels very early. I thought I would start by sharing first some of the experiments and some of the ideas that have been informing my practice along the way.

The first this quote from Rebecca Solnit. This is just an off the cuff remark that she made in an interview in The Believer magazine in 2009 that has really stuck with me. She says, "I still think the revolution is to make the world safe for poetry, meandering, for the frail, and the vulnerable, the rare, and obscure, the impractical, and local, and small." To me, this idea of the local and practical small, the small, making space for tiny revolutions, really resonates with me. I continually find myself asking how, as an educator, and an organizer, I can serve this mission. For me, it's been very helpful to look at other models for guidance along the way.

I've been asking what are some of the other ways that this kind of an idea of the revolution of the impractical and local, and small, how has it been embodied across time and space, and sort of what are some potential next iterations? For me, this revolution is Helen and Scott Nearing, who abandoned urban life in Manhattan in the 1930s to embark on a radical experiment in self sufficiency in

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rural Vermont, where they taught themselves how to construct all the buildings on their property using locally foraged rocks, and little else. Where they harvested just enough maple sugar from the trees on their property to support themselves. They called it bread money. They devoted the rest of their time to scholarship, music, and other pursuits that they found more valuable than money.

It's also Black Mountain College, which is another rural experiment. A school in the mountains of North Carolina where the pedagogical philosophy was rooted, not only as engagement with great thinkers, and makers of the time, but as a series of embedded life practices that formed the viability of their mood of intentional communal living. For me, it's also the fact that Sun Ra was from Saturn. It's also Alice Waters' famous restaurant, Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, California, which is a testament to the way that one extremely persistent person, advocating for the critical importance of local ways, and responsible farming, can lead to a movement grounded in a very intense sense of joie de vivre that is illustrated, among other things, by the fact that the employees on the job wine consumption tally ran so high that it sank the bottom line for about the first decade that the restaurant was in operation. It was nonetheless considered important to the greater mission. They let until they got a business manager, eventually.

It's also Pauline Oliveros's extreme slow walk, one of her many deep listening practices, the challenge of which is that, to quote her, "No matter how slow you are walking, you can always go much slower." I really recommend trying it. It's Rural Studio, a design build program in rural Alabama, where architecture students gain first hand experience in the field, creating innovative public spaces that adapt, and extend, vernacular structures. Where they've been, for years, in the process of devising a prototype for homes that can be built for \$20,000. That comes out to \$8,000 in materials and \$12,000 in labor.

Finally, it's Appalshop, a collective of documentary filmmakers, roadside dramaturges, and radio disk jockeys, who have been embedded in the Appalachian Mountains in eastern Kentucky for nearly 50 years, empowering local power to shape the narrative of their lives, and the region they call home through a radically inclusive collaborative platform.

For me, these models are each very distinct, very distinctly in their own way illustrate possible responses to the idea that SoulNet puts fourth about a type of revolution. They're undeniably tethered to and shaped by the places where they exist. That has lead me to the question of where is the place that will shape my own response to this idea.

For me, since 2014, my response has been on this piece of, primarily, I would say, on this piece of property in southwest Michigan, in a rural township called Galien. It's here were my husband, and collaborator, Micheal Slaboch, purchased a wasted acre of land that housed the remnants of a house, and other outbuildings, that burned the night before Thanksgiving the previous year.

Abandoned for the months that followed, the site resembled an ideal set for an emerging filmmaker's post apocalyptic masterpiece, much more than a place to call home. The location could not really be beat for us, it's right across the street from the place where we were married, where our dear friends live. We didn't really imagine that they'd be asking much for the property, so we thought we could probably afford it.

We embarked on a multiyear project to bring this piece of land back to life and see what we could make of a life out in the countryside. With the help a local renegade contractor name Happy Jack Richter, we burned and buried the remnants of the house, and as well as other structures on the property that were not salvageable. Then we designed and built a home, acting as our own general contractors, which was totally legal. Kind of amazing. Doing much of the work ourselves. This photo right here shows when we were just exiting what was affectionately known as the Lego stage. Then we have subsequently took the advice of a farmer friend of ours in the area, and we observed our surroundings for the course of our first year before making any other decisions. Observing the way the landscape changes from season to season and sometimes from hour to hour. Through this year we began to really notice how much the landscape was shaping us.

As we settled in here, and been thinking a lot about my work, it's been manifesting itself into spaces. The domestic space of the home and the broadcast space of FM Dial. When we designed the house, we knew from the outset that we wanted it to be a multipurpose space, so half of the house is one large room that we call Storehouse. This is a photo from our first soundcheck at Storehouse on New Years Day. We have a really simple premise for this project, which is to invite people over, ask them to bring a dish to share, bring a bottle, and infuse the space with community, art, and sense of ease. We find that house concerts are very perfect vehicle for this.

Our first show was on New Years Day, was William Tyler and James Elkington. Each did a solo show. In the spring we hosted 75 Dollar Bill and Sue Garner from New York City. For each iteration of the Storehouse we produce a zine that serves as both a program for those in attendance, and something to pop in the mail for the many more far flung folks who we hope to share this experience with in some way. The zine showcase the work of our friends as well as our idols. We ask people to write bios for each other. Cathrine Irwin of the Louisville based band, Freakwater, writes haikus for each issue. Really, the zines are just an attempt for us to extend the intimacy and the ideas that infuse our home when it morphs into Storehouse. They provide a low-fi way for us to think about the larger question of how to invite others into this ecosystem that we want to create.

The other medium that I've been tinkering with is low power FM radio. Since August of 2016 I've been broadcasting a weekly freeform radio show on our local station, Radio Harbor Country. That's 106.7 FM, 93.5 FM, if you know where you are. You can see our antenna here is on the Three Oaks water tower.

WRHC is powered not only by 100 watts of community, as some of our board members' favorite slogan goes but it's also by about 30 volunteer DJs who a distinctly idiosyncratic array of programming for the airwaves. The station is home based for my show, Vernacular Media, which is an hour every Saturday morning spent exploring the everyday. The show provides a platform for me to play with how the ideas people, art forms, and other concerns that permeate my everyday, might find a home in this new environment. Each day I play records from Arthur Russell, to Yoko Ono, Alice Coltrane, Willie Nelson, and beyond.

I present a random reading and share unsolicited meditation advice. I introduce listeners to recipes ranging from David Tanis's Save Your Life Garlic Soup, to Jessica Koslow's Tumeric Tonic, and my grandma's famous pasta salad. The recipes definitely seem to be everyone's favorite part. Our local grocery store greeter has referred to me as the recipe lady. I don't know how he recognized me, because it's radio, and I regularly find myself discussing the medicinal benefits of herbs and vegetables at social gatherings when I least expect it.

Oftentimes I sneak in short interviews with people who I invite to join me in the studio to discuss their passions. The more esoteric, the better. My own dad, Charley, provided an in depth tutorial on turkey calling techniques, and the psychological nuances of turkey hunting. My neighbor, Roberta, joined me to discuss one of her great loves, which is lavender. Other guests have included New Jersey's Todd-O-Phonic Todd, who called in to give advice on how to be a better DJ. This was the critical ... It was my New Years resolution, but critically in this episode I learned that dead air was okay. It was very exciting. Filmmaker, Noe Kidder, demonstrated flamenco dancing on plywood sheets brought in from the shed. Chicago based artist, Rashayla Marie Brown, discussed the self care activities that comprised a significant part of her time as an artist and residence at the Roger Brown's home in nearby New Buffalo.

To conclude, I just wanted to state that you know, these are sort of some initial ideas as I, myself, embed a little bit deeper into my new environments. These two platforms have really provided me a way of reflecting a lot lately about how to open up these conversations even more and what the revolutionary potential that could be unearthed in the coming years. It's kind of an ever ongoing research process for me, that is in part of why I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to share this space with these artists and scholars who are on this panel today. Thank you.

Alex Gartelmann:

My body of ... It's kind of two bodies of work that are one body of work. Some of it is my own personal work and then some of it is the work I do with my collaborator, Jonas Sebura. They are intertwined but different, but the same. I would not be here without Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi in that they have really kind of challenged me to look at things that were far outside anything that I knew when I got to Chicago in 2010. A lot of the work that I started making from that point on is really kind of thinking through these self taught artists, and the vernacular, and artist environments. I think a lot about the narratives of the

place that I grew up, which is a pretty remote part of northwestern New Jersey in that it was a really rural community that I was very bored in. Through skateboarding, and punk rock, and art, I kind of found an out to these kind of larger places of culture.

I think a lot about the kind of narrative structures of a lot of the tableaux of the self taught builders like the Fred Smith Concrete Site and how he's building these environments, or these tableaux that kind of tell about his experience and the people that he's encountered. My experience of growing up in New Jersey and not having much very much money, but very much wanting to be a part of something bigger than myself, that in ... You would buy a white tee and then write your band, the band's name on it, and then it would get really gross, and you would wear it all the time, because it was the only thing you had. These are kind of my hardcore t-shirts. They are just t-shirts soaked in resin with kind of different phrases, kind of playing with language in different ways. This is a sculpture that my collaborator and I did, so it says, "Foo Fighters," but Fighters is crossed out, and it says, "Foogazi," which is this seminal post hardcore band from Washington DC.

Thinking a lot about the kind of awkwardness of the human form in developmental stages of life. How uncomfortable I felt in my body from the moment that I recognized I had a bod to how I still feel now as a 33 year old. That there's not that much difference between a really horribly awkward 14 year old and being a semiprofessional 33 year old. Jonas and I have a lot of conversations around that and thinking about how the physical space that we share as collaborators can be kind of siphoned down into these formal decisions within the sculpture, so it has these big shiny swollen feet, and really bad hair, and a t-shirt that's way too big. This is the bag head buddy, where again, big swollen feet, bad hair sticking out from the bag. This thing is like four feet tall. Thinking of these really simple sculptural gestures that kind of in the same way that Fred Smith, or Mary Nohl, they're kind of working in these fairly simple sculptural gestures to talk about the human form, or to talk about some type of figurative form.

Then in 2015 I started a body of work that was my own in my studio. I was thinking a lot about the Concrete Sculpture Park the Wisconsin Concrete Social Park and how Fred was using the materials that were around him to create these tableaux. I started thinking a lot about my friends growing up, and kind of the people that had really been around me, and formed who I was as a person, and what those materials were that were around me. These sculptures are made out of carpet, and panty hose, and helium tanks, and these kind of really simple non-materials in a lot ways, that they're also the sculptures have this feeling of being somewhat unfinished. Again, distilling the human form down into these really odd gestures that kind of fell ... The formal gestures became these kind of links to an emotional feeling in those developmental times.

Jonas and I, I'm going to skip around a little bit, we did the residency in the Foundry at the Kohler Factory last summer. We are really interested in signage, and this is really hard to tell in the image, but these all have text scribed into them. I think the only one you can probably read is the one that says, "Nothing is fucked," so, sorry. Not sorry. We made a series of 20 of these. They're plated cast brass and they each have a different inscription in them. They're related to a project that I'll actually end the lecture on. This is the list of things that are dead, dead wrong, dead set, dead air, dead arm, dead tired, dead leg, so on and so forth.

We were thinking a lot about the language that gets used between us, that gets used between our cohort of peers, and the language that we use, or that we're exposed to, can be this other tool for defining a space. We also made a set of cast iron pans that have these different sets of symbols, we're really interested in vernacular symbol making, particularly that of itinerant travelers during the Great Depression and kind of developing these sets of symbols around our own practice looking at Oddfellow symbols. This is a little bit of an ode to Jesse Howard, because in the bottom it says, "Sorehead," which we like to think of ourselves as because we love Jesse. Misfits from antics Soreheads. We made a series of pans, they're editions of two, one for me, one for Jonas, while we were in residence.

Then a big part of our practice has been architectural and kind of thinking about physical architectural spaces that talk about the physical relationship between Jonas and I. This piece is actually, we both use to work at a residence, an artist residency, in western Michigan called Oxbow. There's a lot of these vernacular western Michigan lake cabins that kind of populate the campus. We decided that it would be a good idea to build an Oxbow cabin in a canoe that we could live on together for three weeks, which was interesting. Then we lived on and off it for three weeks. We had parties out there. We kind of hosted events where people would float out in tubes and hang out. We would grill. It really started ... It was this kind of peace where we really started thinking about what does it mean for the two of us to occupy a space that is 11 feet long by 20 inches wide and how do we navigate the physical intimacy of that space.

That has kind of been this constant moment of thinking in our work since then. This is a project we did in New Orleans a few years ago that's called Juke Joint for One. Where we proposed the gallery that we would build a space on the outside of the gallery thinking there's no way they would let us do it and then they emailed us back and said, "That sounds great." Which was great. We actually had ... We knew that we were going to build the structure. We were thinking a lot about the environment builder Clarence Schmidt and that we wanted to build this kind of window structure that came out of the second floor of this building, but we were having a hard time reconciling what we were going to do with the inside. We actually had to pick up a sculpture here at the Art Center, and then we drove the Mississippi River Road to Memphis, where we installed that sculpture, and then went from Memphis to New Orleans.

In Memphis we stopped at this place called Wild Bill's, which is a really old juke joint. Just had this moment of realizing that we grew up on the East Coast, we had been kind of embedded in a really particular set of cultural understanding and that we were moving into these places that really were the roots of American culture that we hadn't really been exposed to before. That it was so profoundly moving for us. We wanted to kind of create this space that when the viewer came into the gallery they could then go into this space. You would walk through that door, crawl through the exterior window, and then be inside this space. That you could have this moment of being in that architectural space for yourself that had an ambiance that we had kind of fell into while we were there. There's a record player that's playing Fats Waller, and a ceiling fan, and all kinds of little things.

Then this is another project we did where we were thinking, Jonas had left Chicago, moved to Kansas City, and we were trying to figure out how we were a collaborative from a distance, no longer working in the same studio, and how we still kind of talked about architecture. We did this project where we built this pallet of things, of material, that would essentially build you a really, really shitty hotel room. It was based on these drawings that we were making on the descriptions of architecture in a series of books that we were reading over a six month period. Then we kind of very subjectively distilled those architectural spaces down into this drawing, which is our own blueprint, and then palletized all the material that it would take to create this space. In theory, you could ship this material anywhere, build yourself your grimy hotel room, pack it up, ship it somewhere else, and build it somewhere else.

This is ... While I was still living in Chicago my friends and I, who I shared a studio with, like I said going back to skateboarding, and punk rock being these form of spaces, we were now in our 30s, all played music together, realizing we could never be in a touring band. We did this project where we built a room that was the size of the inside of a Ford Econoline van, like a touring van, and set all of our stuff up in it.

It's just like a little button and a red dial.

We had wanted to do that at a gallery for an opening that we had and the gallery said, "No way. Someone might get hit in the face with flying material," so what we ended up doing is running a U-Haul, parking the U-Haul in front of the gallery, keeping the door to the U-Haul closed, with an extension cord running out the back. Then someone ran out of the gallery and plugged it in. We played outside really loud for 10 minutes, drew everybody out into the street, and then drove away, and then came back to gallery, no one knew it was us. We were like, "Were you here when that truck came? It was really crazy." That was our ... We can't break the thing, so we'll do this other thing to disrupt the evening.

Again, this issue of that seemed like a space for us. There's this band called Friends Forever that would tour and they would play their show in their van outside the venue as the opening act. A lot of us had seen them. That was kind

of this really interesting way for us to think about a communal space that travels, that has all these different layers of meaning.

Then, the final thing I'll talk about is this is a project we did here, at the Art Center, in 2014 called Church. We were looking a lot at things like Dickeyville Grotto, and these other kind of vernacular built grotto spaces, looking at Gordon Matta-Clark, looking at Jesse Howard, and thinking about the skate park as our sacred, or spiritual, space growing up. It's the place that we went, that got us away from the complications, or the things, that were really problematic, that we found to be problematic, where we group. We also covered it in hand painted signage that we made as our node to Jesse. There was a sign that says Sorehead Hill somewhere on. These are some of the signs. Yeah. This is like I had a funny moment where we were putting the signs up and Karen had asked us to not put any signs with bad language on the front of the ramp. I tried to sneak this one on to the front and she immediately flagged it and sent it to the back.

Then the great thing was that at the very end of the exhibition the Art Center so amazingly accommodated what we thought was a huge ask. We're skeptical of have happening. They cleared all the rest of the work out of the gallery and we held a big public program where we brought in a bunch local skateboarders, and some people from Chicago, and held this big event that brought in a huge crowd of people who hadn't really been comfortable with coming to the Art Center before. That felt kind of like this really magical culmination for us of bringing this different levels of space into the institution. That's what I got. Thanks.

Katie Shlon:

All right, we're going to take some time to listen to a lot of things. I don't have too many pictures to look at, I apologize. I hope it's still interesting. I thought I would just start by saying thank you to Lisa Stone specifically. I think that my experience in school was one, at the school of the Art Institute of Chicago, that really changed the way I thought about the work that I could make. I probably wouldn't have arrived at my current art practice without really taking some time to think about art existing outside of an art world that we get so immersed in, in school. I just wanted to start by talking about this project I did immediately after school called Play Some Songs to Make the Plants Grow.

I grew up in South Carolina as a first generation Arab-American, which was incredibly complicated, as you might imagine if anyone is from the South. I've always kind of had a relationship with the landscape that I haven't quite understood until recently. I think that in anyway I can explore other people's relationships with the landscape has helped me kind of understand why I feel like it so important to me and my identity. When I heard about a few places that I went to visit on this road trip after school, I was thinking a lot about where we place ourselves in our environments. One of the most important places, I won't talk about all of them, was Noah Purifoy's Outdoor Desert Art Museum in Joshua Tree, California. This is kind of a really amazing place where not only are things just placed out in the desert, but they also are affected by the desert landscape in the same way that our bodies are affected by the landscape and

the environment. You've got the hot, hot sun beat down on metal sculptures, which are incredibly hot, and the just relentless wind blowing things around and making sound

With this project specifically I started to make field recordings of what that sounded and felt like and improvised some music to go along with that. A lot of these are kind of meditations on what's happening in an environment and really understanding your placement within that. I guess we'll start by looking at this image, because this was really the only great documentation I have doing these performances. We'll start by listening to a performance I did at Our Mother of Sorrows Grotto in Iowa, on the Appalachian Dulcimer.

I'm going to just talk over this a little bit. With a lot of these improvisations I spent time meditating with the space and really kind of thinking about what is already existing in the environment, what kind of living score I'm performing with. I would notice, for example, a blooping of the water tank, I don't exactly know what created that sound at this reflecting pool at the grotto. This living soundtrack of birds around, and thought about how reflective that experience is just thinking, and then how that could also be reflected in sound or music. I not only play Appalachian Dulcimer, but I play the cello, I play the guitar, I play the drums, I play a lot of other instruments. I feel I'm constantly trying to think about what makes sound and what possibilities for sound there are, which is what was so exciting about playing along with Noah Purifoy's site, which we'll listen to a little bit of next. Which was improvised on electric guitar.

I think the most important thing I learned from the experience of recording these pieces was that sometimes it's more important to not play music as a musician and to just be aware of what else is happening. As an improviser, specifically, if anyone plays music, knows that you also have to allow space for the other person to act. In this case the environment was my collaborator. Just allowing for some meditation within the landscape was something that became incredibly important to me. Since doing this project has become a huge part of my artistic practice.

I'm just going to skip ahead to some more recent work, which involves working with a international collective of artists in northwest Scotland, in an incredibly remote area. It takes about 24 hours to get to this house that we work at. Then from there it's about an hour walk up to the house. A lot of the things that we make, or have there, or what we can easily bring with us in backpacks, or only recently have we decided that we could maybe get things shipped to us. It's actually really inconvenient to do that. I think next year still we'll just go back to bringing things along. A lot of the work that we do as a collective is research and collaboration, I have an almost entirely collaborative practice. Taking care of the house that we stay at is another huge part of that.

I found this willow tree that desperately needed pruning. Then with the ends of that I was thinking about what kind of possibilities for sound there was with tree branches so I made tambourine of willow branches and some lipid shells, which

were everywhere actually around the shore, which was about a 10 minute walk from the house. I also made another percussive piece which I called the Shell Lute, although it isn't exactly one of those. Let's see if the ... I guess we lost some of the video slides. With these pieces, specifically, it's kind of thinking about this new kind of environment that we were all creating at this house in terms of what's at hand and what we can do together. There's some video works which are in progress. I guess I should have mentioned that this work is incredibly new, just within the past few months. In terms of building a set of instruments, or tools, for contemplation within the landscape in Scotland.

We'd also find other objects around the house. In this instance there's just a piece of wood that's been around for a while. Myself and my collaborator made a psaltery, which was really hard to do, because neither of us have ever built instruments before. We're more concerned with the potential for sound that have and not necessarily how to make those things happen. If anything, they're just tools for performance. The performance itself is not necessarily important. As you can hear, it does kind of sound like ... I wonder if I can start it over. It does sound like a string instrument. Sorry.

Then I just include some slides here of some work that I've just recently finished two days ago, which is still in the studio stage. Just going along with what's at hand in the environment and what has the potential for making sound. My collaborator, Fionn Duffy, who I also work with in Scotland, and I, made this concrete bottle wall, which doubles as a pipe. In blowing in each of the bottles you can create a different sound. It has different opportunities for performance, which we still haven't quite figured out yet. We also made a cake drum of a painting because landscape painting is over. The landscape is more important than the painting. We're kind of experimenting with how we can make sounds with that. We're building some vibration amplifiers, contact mics, and other sort of new tech things to experiment with how we can include field records, and sculptural work. In addition to that, this a copper plumbing pipe, which we twisted up to mimic what we would think a plumbing pipe would like it sounded like.

I don't know, it's really incredibly hard for me to talk about my work because I feel like I'm still in this really new stage of working and making. This is kind of where I'm at. I'm always willing to talk about it more. Thank you.

Michal Lynn:

My name is Michal Lynn. I'm also really grateful to Lisa Stone, and to Kohler, and to Pete, and Valerie, that has just making this amazing thing happen.

Today I'm speaking about a garden that sits about an hour north of Rome, Bomarzo's 16th Century Sacro Bosco, or The Sacred Wood, or The Villa of Marbles, or The Monster Park, depending on who you ask, and when. I have two ideas that I want to cover in my time. First is to share in photographs my own experience over a series of visits to the garden and to talk through what I was able to learn and understand as student pretty new to the field by being there in person. Both in terms of the individual sculpture situation with in the terrain of

the park as well as the park's geographic situation within the landscape around Bomarzo. In thinking about the landscape the park belongs to, I'm considering it pretty broadly and diachronically looking at both nearby Etruscan ruins as well as other mannerist gardens produced around the same time in neighboring towns. There are also artist built environments in the area from the 20th Century that I want to mention here to kind of orient us even though I'm not discussing them in detail. In particular, Tomaso Buzzi's La Scarzuola, begun in 1956, and Niki de Saint Phalle's Giardino dei Tarocchi, which she worked on from 1978 to 1998.

Along those lines the second piece that I want to touch on is the little bit that we do know about visits by artists and writers to the Sacro Bosco shortly after it was rediscovered outside of Bomarzo so in the mid 20th Century and the way that they've played into the reception of the park given that it was largely abandoned and unknown outside of the area for the 300 years following the death of [inaudible 00:41:33] Orsini, who commissioned the park.

I was introduced to artist built environments in Professor Lisa Stone's Better Homes and Gardens course at SAIC. My academic background is actually in the architectural components of contemporary fashion shows and exhibitions. I was very much drawn to thinking spatially through the sites that we were introduced to and trying to understand what it felt like to be there, how placement and terrain might affect how different components were perceived. When I had the opportunity to visit sites near Rome I was especially eager to get to Bomarzo Sacro Bosco because I had not yet been able to get the sense of place from the material that was available to me. Online, and in print, the garden seems to be represented almost exclusively in really closely cropped photographs of individual sculptures. From Chicago I could figure out a kind of loose list of these objects but had no sense of how the garden functioned in its entirety, how it functioned as a space rather than as a series.

Thanks to the Rhodes Scholarship for Research and Travel I spent my first four days in Bomarzo in May of 2015. I found the garden and surrounding area quite compelling, and returned that same November. Again, the next November, and now I'm now in the process of moving there. If nothing else I can serve as a kind of anecdotal data point for the general magnetism that the place seems to have. I'm really grateful to have been able to see the park in so many different modes. Like Penny touched on, at different times at day, and in different seasons, because the garden can take on a really wide range of characteristics. In May and September it tends to be blindingly sunny. In November it's consistently quite foggy until early afternoon. The park is a fairly well known tourist attraction so you might have the place to yourself in the fall, especially at dusk, always go at dusk, but on a morning in May the parking lot is likely full, and the park is all but guaranteed to be completely overrun by adorable school children.

In the compound around the park are playgrounds and picnic areas so it attracts a lot of families on the weekend as well. For these reasons the garden can feel, today, like a kind of ongoing contradiction, operating to degrees and often

simultaneously both as a meditative nature trail and a completely campy theme park. In addition to the shifting mood of the garden, my biggest impression has been of the importance of the landscape, and the ways in which the sculptures, and trails, and piazzas, seem to very much emerge from it. In the last year a write up of the site by Monica [Sween 00:44:39] has been translated from French and posted to the Spaces Archive. I'd like to quote from that here, because I think it gives a good sense of the sort of texture. "With it's successive terraces, it's interlacing, and it's stairs connecting various levels, the park predisposes visitors to wandering and meditation. Carved directly into the rock, the statues seem to have grown from the Earth itself. The gray color of the volcanic rock, mixing with tones of oxides, along with the vegetation, and play of shadows, and lights, all contribute to create an almost hypnotic atmosphere."

In addition to its organic seeming appearance, I want to convey as well here the degree to which it is difficult, if not impossible, to orient yourself with in the park. I don't necessarily mean that you feel disoriented or lost, but rather in the sense that you cannot hold the entire garden in your mind at once. The five or six interlocking terraces that it's built on do not clearly present their perimeters and most sight lines you might have from one to the next are very much obscured by trees and bushes.

As of experience in visiting neighboring late 16th Century gardens, specifically at the Villa Farnese in Caprarola and Villa Lante in Bagnaia, it is Bomarzo's resistance to a cohesive hole that really sets it apart from its contemporaries. The blend of nature and architecture, the use of classical and allegorical figures, the prominence of water throughout the site, as well as the subtle and overt whimsy, call be found in other mannerist gardens. Yet they read completely differently. You get a sense of this when you look at them from above. Specifically the use of terracing is quite legible, and geometric, at Bagnaia and Caprarola, while you can see at Bomarzo there's something very different going on.

I want to return now to the texture of the park and the way it seems to emerge from the woods that it is situated in because there's a certain light bulb that goes off if you're able to visit the nearby woods. If you continue down the road from town behind the park, there's the enormous Monte Casoli Nature Reserve to the west, and on the opposite side of Bomarzo, the town to the east, is another series of trails through Etruscan ruins including the Pyramid of Bomarzo. It was only after being able to spend time in these places that the garden really kind of clicked into focus for me. While it's still mysterious, and endermatic, it also kind of now makes absolute sense. I'm talking about a general affinity in resonance between the Etruscan villages long submerged in dirt and vegetation and the sculptures that seem to emerge from the Sacro Bosco, but there are also a couple somewhat more literally parallels that I want to highlight.

One is the mausoleum at the park with it's funerary niches meant to mimic Etruscan niches, including those that can be seen at Monte Casoli, that far away.

The other is a carved ruin near the pyramid that just completely took my breath away when I first walked into it. Without thinking about it, it felt exactly like being inside the Hell Mouth at the park. It could be total coincidence and I'm certainly not arguing that there's some sort of direct inspiration or reference happening. I would argue that the Sacro Bosco should be at the very least considered within the larger context of the surrounding woods. Can you tell which one is which? One of them has a tooth. I tell you.

Switching gears and looking at the historical context. There's a kind of mid-century literary and artistic who's who list of visitors to the park from Salvador Dali, to Mario Praz, to Alberto Moravia, to Herbert List. While I'm still working on tracking down more details, it does seem like most of these visits did happen. Like we were hearing this morning, it seems it was the artists and writers visiting the park in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, who paved the way for scholars who followed with the bulk of academic publishing on the park happening in the 1960s and especially 70s and 80s.

I want to wrap up with one artist who I've not seen listed among known visitors but who I'm convinced must have been there. That's Pier Paolo Pasolini seen here photographed in Rome in 1953 by Herbert List. Something I found out while wandering in the woods and speaking with people on Bomarzo that I might otherwise have no idea about is Pasolini's pretty profound connection to the area. In 1964 he filmed the baptism scene from The Gospel According to Saint Matthew at the waterfalls that are within walking distance of the pyramid. By 1970 he purchased a neighboring medieval tower and compound that sits between Bomarzo and Chia, just one town east. He built a home there and spent more and more time in Chia up until his death, I should say his murder, in 1975.

Even almost three years in I feel like I'm very much still just scratching the surface. Moving back and forth in time and zooming in and out geographically has been incredibly rewarding. I'll just say, everyone is invited. If you want to ... Thank you.

Brett Hanover:

My name is Brett Hanover. I'm a filmmaker from Memphis. I want to talk about the way my research and travel to art environments has influenced some ideas in my film work, and vice versa, go down a rabbit hole. I hope it will be fun. This is a still from my most recent project. It's a feature length documentary fiction and animation hybrid film called Rukus that I've been working on for the past couple years, which will be released soon. You see in this still you have a kid standing here with his imaginary friend in this bedroom, surrounded by drawings of strange characters, diagrams, and they're looking through these blinds out at the outside world. This film basically deals with themes of trauma, mental health, and queer and alternative sexuality. Specifically it takes its name, Rukus, from this individual who was a friend and collaborator of mine when I was a teenager, who took his own life in 2008.

Rukus as an artist was primarily active in the furry community, or the furry fandom, which is a youth subculture. If you're not familiar with it, the gist of it, it involves using personal anthropomorphic animal avatars in order to create spaces for playful socialization. Virtual spaces for playful socializations. That could be online through 3D avatars, but it could also be through illustrations on name badges, or like you see here, these kind of elaborate homemade costumes. Here they are at the Memphis Holiday Inn Conference Center. One of the great virtual spaces.

Rukus's main art project and most of this he didn't show to anybody until ... Nobody saw it until after he passed away, was this kind of elaborate fantasy narrative project which he called [Ira's 00:52:32] End. It's a paracosm, or a world building project, it includes maps, character diagrams, charts, genealogies, bits and fragments of stories. This was never finished. He was always playing with it, mixing things around, continually working on it. Just to show you real quick, it spanned across a lot of different media, so several sketchbooks dating back to when he was a child, writings online on different journals, online art archives, and then a variety of costume props, and avatar, digital avatar pieces that he used to perform characters from this narrative in various furry social spaces.

A lot of what was going on in his project was not just fantasy, but it was very personal. The main character was based on himself. It involved dealing with and representing things having to do with being a survivor of childhood sexual abuse as well as feelings of disassociation and depression that he dealt with all his life. Just to kind of put this in context, this project, this kind of project, I like to think of it in terms of other kind of world building, imaginative world building projects. Just kind of going clock ... Let's see, top right, you have the [Angria 00:54:00] and [Gondol 00:54:00] project of the Brante siblings. Of course, Henry Darger's project. Marwencol is another example of this kind of playful world building project, Mark Hogancamp. Then for [Forcadia 00:54:12], which is a ... I could have chosen any example of these kind of online social spaces.

Personally I have found it really useful to think about the different kind of virtual worlds that he was involved with and that are part of this film project in an expansive way that sort of cuts across media and incorporates children's paracosms and imaginary worlds, toy worlds, online virtual worlds, and art environments, all together, under a category of virtual world building. Which I think gives virtual reality this interesting longer history as a practice that has been remediated through over time.

To zoom in a little bit I want to talk about this aspect of Rukus's work. This is an image that shows up frequently throughout all of his sketchbooks and it's written about extensively. It's probably the most common image. It's this machine that he calls the Alter Dreamer's Project. Very briefly in his cosmology you have this godlike being who is asleep. The dream of that being is this entire imaginary universe. Within that universe there is a child who represents Rukus, and this child is the only person who has the ability to interface directly with that dream. A sinister military force takes this child, puts him in this machine,

which is a kind of full body virtual reality encasement, and the idea is they're going to program him in order to hack the dream, program reality.

I talked with Rukus's boyfriend about this in an interview. He was like, "You know, it's pretty Matrix-y." I think the big difference here is that in Ruku's machine there's not a real world to get back to it's recursive. The dream world and the real world are kind of nested together. This child trapped in this machine is kind of mediating the two. The basic diagram here, I think, has some similarities to the idea of the influencing machine, which is a kind of illustration that has been drawn as a way for people to represent the feeling of schizophrenic experiences. On the left you have, I think that's Robert Gee did that illustration. It's showing the body as composed of machines, and channels, enmeshed in more machines and channels. It's this dissolve of boundaries. Then on the right here this is the first published work of psychiatric art by James Tilley Matthews, which is the heirloom. He drew this as a description of mind control. When he says mind control he's representing it, or he's talking about it, not just as they're controlling his mind but they're also surveilling him. It's this sense of, for him, it was not they put this thought in my head, it's, "I don't know which thoughts are mine and which are theirs. I have no point of reference because I'm completely within this system." It's very much about this sense of derealization or dissolve of boundaries.

I'm also not saying Rukus was schizophrenic, this diagram has shown up in science fiction, the basic idea, it shows up in media theory as a way of talking about advertising, stuff like that. It's a common image now, but it does have something to do with that kind of feeling.

I think about 15 years ago there was an artist, and I'm not remembering his name right now. British artist who sort of literalized this and built this big sculpture of Matthews's heirloom. I kind of feel like, to me, this doesn't work in the sense that he makes it into this big hulking terrifying machine, whereas what I think what Matthews was trying to get at was not he scared of this specific heirloom that looked like this with drawers, and knobs, and everything, but he was trying to get at the idea of the basic diagram of this machine. The system of relationships and forces that he felt he was a part of. He didn't know what it looked like and he labeled it not in illustration but a diagram.

Similarly to that, and people may have other interpretations, but I think that this is the Forevertron just down the road. I think this is another example of something that is ... It sort of has the machine aesthetic, it's the image of a machine, it's maybe talking about technology. It's steampunk. I don't think it's machinic work in the sense that I don't think that there is a diagram that you can abstract from this. I don't feel like there's a system at work there, necessarily. Again, other people may have different opinions.

In contrast to that I visited the Integratron in Joshua Tree, built by George Van Tassel, 1950s. He built this literally, I mean it's wired, very special construction, to work as a machine to heal living cells, and rejuvenate you as well as time

travel. Van Tassel channeled this, the plans for this, from extraterrestrials, kind of in the era of contactees, when everybody kind of had their own personal alien contact that they referenced. Also, in addition to the channeled information that he had about this, it follows very closely the diagram of an invention, an Radionics device called the Multi Wave Oscillator. It was built by, you see on the left a man named Lakhovsky. His basic idea was that the organization of a cell, the way a cell hung together in homeostasis, was proof of some sort of resonant life energy. That that energy could be amplified through vibrations.

The Integratron there, you see a model of the Integratron that's within the Integratron, and on the right, you see a Multi Wave Oscillator made by Duncan Laurie that's printed. He's been doing sort of Radionic art as just illustrations that work, according to him. It basically, what you see here, is that it is the same basic circuit diagram in all these works. You can kind of see all these works as instances of the same kind of score or machine. Just in passing Van Tassel, he funded the construction of the Integratron with funds from the first UFO conventions, which he held in the middle of the desert near Joshua Tree.

I think the energy that Van Tassel is talking about is very similar to the kind of energy that Ed Leedskalnin was working with in his books about magnetic current. He's the creator of the Coral Castle environment in Florida. I think there's something ... This is kind of my pet theory but it's a way of thinking about it. Basically these ... If you read both of their writings they seem to be talking about taking an idea of information, or organization, so feedback, homeostasis, order and noise, morphology, et cetera, taking that kind of idea, and then reifying it as this transcendental life force. When you do that, when you create, when you take the organization of the world and make it into this ethereal substance, you can start reinterpreting everything endlessly. In the case of Coral Castle there's just a million interpretations that people are doing online, like incredible Coral Castle fanart, basically. That's a real deep wormhole.

Finally, I wanted to ... Very briefly I'll wrap up, but thing about Emery Blagdon's work, I was kind of thinking, he made a healing machine. Well kind of healing machine is it? What's the diagram? What's the circuit pattern and how is he thinking about energy? You read things like functional devices arranged like a circuit board, reflectors and generators, he was building magnetic machines, but I spoke with a few people who knew Blagdon. One thing Connie Paxton said was that he didn't really use the term healing machine. She was very clear, and I'm sure there are people here who know more about this than I do, but she kind of spoke about the idea that he never believed it had literal healing power as far as the ability to actually heal diseases or anything like that. The more I talked to her and dug into it, it seems like, for him, when he's talking about electricity, or energy, it's not this transcendental other thing. It's very much how you would talk about sensation, perception, aesthetics, and his position within that. When he talks about a machine it's not this thing that he is alienated from, or in some way trying to figure out the perfect plan of, it's very much a way of talking about an intuitive embodied process of art making.

Which relates to, last slide, how the film closes is with an animation in which the interview segments from the documentary become animated. Rukus's machine is reset, reality and fantasy merge, and we sort of end up back where we started at the Holiday Inn, not necessarily knowing what to do, but at least being present. Thanks.

Penny Duff: All right, thank you all very much for sharing. We have the time for one or maybe two questions. Anybody has anything burning that you want to talk about.

Speaker 6: [inaudible 01:05:26] film Brett?

Brett Hanover: Yes, and it will be hopefully premiering very early next year, winter, yeah.

Speaker 6: How can we see it?

Brett Hanover: Hopefully it will be at film festivals, and venues, and stuff. It will be available for free online after that, or you can ask me, you know. I'll write it down for you, a link.

Speaker 7: I am you 50 years a later. When I was 19 I met Clarence Schmidt. I was in Woodstock where he made his mirrored house. It's no longer there, it's all gone, but it infected me with his virus just as you've been infected by the viruses that infected you. I continue to, when I was able to, I continued to develop my art through making an environment. I wish you luck.

Speaker 8: Michal I was just wondering, your research that you're doing, is it for something? Where is it? Can we find more about it? The work that you're doing at the gardens? You're moving there. Is that why you're moving there?

Michal Lynn: In a way yes. It's still in a thousand pieces on my laptop.

Speaker 8: It's going somewhere.

Michal Lynn: Yes.

Speaker 8: I can't wait.

Michal Lynn: Thank you.

Speaker 8: Yeah.

Speaker 9: This is for Michal Lynn. The Sacro Bosco, was that built kind of like a ruin in the first place? Because those tilted buildings or did they tilt?

Michal Lynn: Yeah, the leaning house was built originally to look just like that. It's hard to tell, the rock is really soft, so it's ... Short answer, I don't think it was originally meant

to look that ruined but there's honestly just so much we don't know. Did 300 years of overgrowth preserve it or the opposite, there's so many more questions than answers. The things that seem off are mostly intentionally off.

Speaker 10:

Some of you may know that Alex is currently living in and doing the restoration on Mary Nohl house for the John Michael Kohler Arts Center. Alex, I'd be curious to know, I don't see ... The limited information I have about your work, I don't see many points of confluence between your work and Mary Nohl's work. I was just curious, living there, do you see points of confluence, or points of similarity, and do you see that experience impacting your own life as an artist in your own art making processes?

Alex Gartelmann:

Sure. I think mostly it becomes about permission. I think that for all the environment builders that's my main point of connection for them. Most of the other artists I know, it's like I will find any excuse to talk myself out of making a decision. Like, "It's too window out, so I can't make anything today." I think that I can always circle back to that effort in making where it's about giving yourself permission to do, and worrying about the answer later, and trusting in the intuitive nature in your making practice. The answer is there even if you don't know it in that moment. I think that being at Mary's and generally feeling bad about myself every morning when I get because of how prolific she was, that the strength of that permission becomes a little bit stronger everyday for me. Yeah.