

SPACES has a rich and dedicated history of addressing key environmental issues, as witnessed by exhibitions like *Regional Forecast: work by artists from Buffalo, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh*; and *Great Lake Erie; Imagining an Inland Sea*, as well as artists-in-residence Margaret Cogswell, who explored the social and political role of water in sustaining communities, and Renée Gertler, who alerted us to the implications of our actions on our local environments.

But it is SuperOrg, a residency that has brought us the creative energies of Frances Whitehead, who, along with artist Lisa Norton, explored the complexities and sustainable potential inherent to our region. SuperOrg, the artists' term inspired by the new scientific category of "superorganism," is an organism made of interdependent and cooperating entities.

Thus, what began as a public art intervention intended to foster discussion about the social role of art has evolved into an experimental model for public planning processes that include artists as key players. Conceived in response to the context of the Towpath Trail Extension Initiative in conjunction with the Towpath Trail Committee, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, and Cleveland Metroparks, this project has now expanded to address future possibilities for the larger region and the Cuyahoga River Valley. With



the engagement of these and myriad other groups, our community has begun to recognize that having artists at the decision-making table is vital to arriving at the economic, environmental, and cultural progress toward which we all strive.

Establishing dialogue between the art community and civic planners, and creating a context for interdisciplinary collaborations that foster innovation has required tremendous efforts. Our thanks to Frances and Lisa for their commitment to this project; Patty Stevens for her guidance; Paul Alsenas for his trust; Don Harvey for the inspiration his Natural Flats project gave; Sarah Beiderman for adeptly overseeing this extraordinary residency; Tony Fry for his compelling essay; and Pam Cerio, for her excellent brochure design.

We are especially grateful to the Ohio Arts Council and the Cuyahoga County ACE grant program for their project support, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Nimoy Foundation, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Frances Whitehead and Lisa Norton have propelled the ongoing work to advance the Cuyahoga River Valley as a portal to global economies, as well as individual experiences, to a new level of meaning and innovation. They, as well as local artists, have again demonstrated with the beauty and power of a LeBron James slam dunk, the indispensable role that artists have at the core of reshaping our region.

— Paul Alsenas, Director, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission

This project brings a crucial and fresh perspective in our quest to realize the Cuyahoga Valley as a catalyst for community revitalization. The artists' deep understanding of sustainability applied to the Towpath greenway corridor shows us how "art as process" illuminates a pathway for the optimization of the work ahead.

— Patty Stevens, Chief of Park Planning, Cleveland Metroparks

A Path to the Future

As names go, the 'Ohio and Erie Canalway Towpath Trail Extension' does not have the ring of a really exciting exercise, but this is exactly what it is. It actually has the ability to take the existing towpath cum bike-track, and turn it into an agent of change that will give a 'transitional' area of Cleveland new purpose and vitality.

In the not too distant future, travelling the Towpath, as it weaves its way through the historical industrial heartland of Cleveland, will become a journey of discovery of past memories and future possibilities. The provision of such experience has been central to the conception of a proposal for the Steelyard Commons trail segment by two Chicago artists, Frances Whitehead and Lisa Norton. As we shall see, their creative input has been considerable.

Framings. When conservationists set out to restore natural environments, they do not start where things are worst. They do the reverse, beginning from where things are best, extending forward and outward, making good use of pioneer species of plants and trees. By such means, even the most devastated areas eventually become revegetated and biodiverse. Framed by this kind of thinking, the Towpath project needs to be understood as a spine that extends viable urban space into a predominantly industrial zone. Thereafter, on and around this spine, sustainable natural, social and economic environments can be grown.

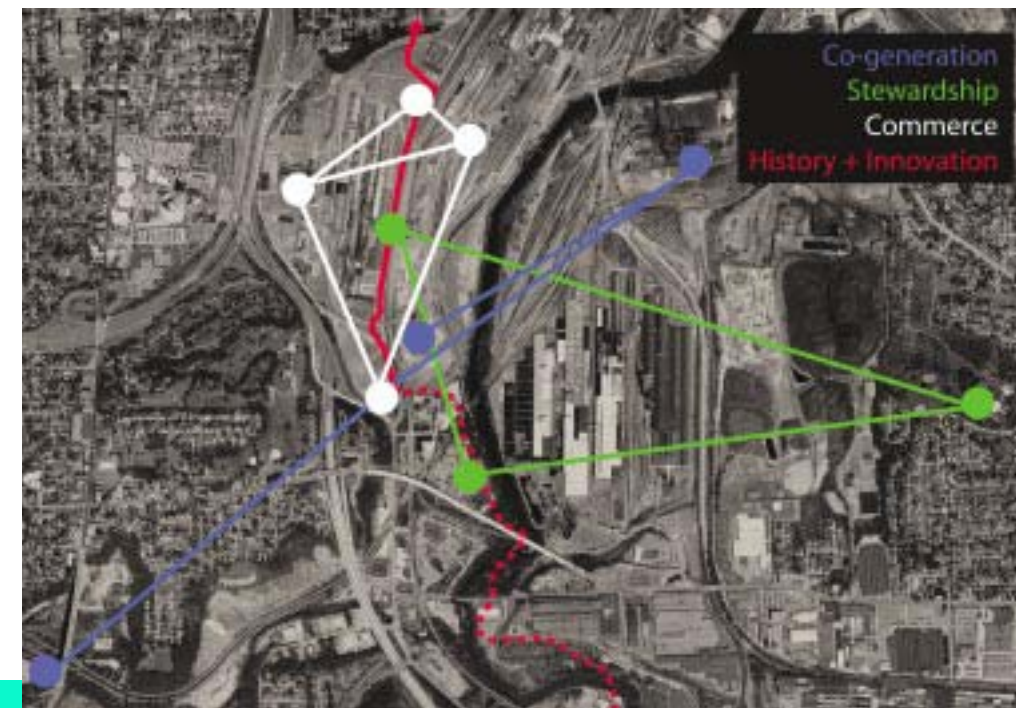
Such projects should not be viewed as just locally significant. They are examples of the kind of redirective leadership that is needed globally; they demonstrate ways to develop and secure the environments and ecologies of our dependence. If humanity is to overcome its current 'condition of defuturing unsustainability,' ways of communicating positive forms of change are essential.

It's worth remembering that for the first time in human history cities now support over half the world's population. The dynamic towards rapid urbanization, and associated urban sprawl, continues unabated. Counter to the fundamental interests and needs of city dwellers, this 'development process takes a great deal of good agricultural land out of productive use. As the world's population continues to grow and urbanize, the land available to grow the food needed to physically sustain humanity diminishes. Additionally, the impacts of global warming are making this already critical situation worse.

The Towpath project not only has the potential to transform an industrial valley into a space of responsible and sustainable urban development but, and more immediately, it could provide an amenity able to improve the quality of life for the population of Cleveland and its visitors.

Content. Acting as redirective practitioners (a name given to any creative professional who bring their skills and creativity to solve problems of unsustainability) artists Frances

Project Principles
Understand and make visible the (g)local.
Identify and make visible other invisible economies.
Find new uses for local materials and by-products.
Consume what is produced at hand.
Use the first segment of the Trail to generate materials that you use to make the Trail itself.
Build citizen and organizational capacity for new methodologies.
The Towpath is a machine that can make a sustainable future for Cleveland.
The Steelyard Commons Towpath segment appears straight, but is actually a superorg of cycles of (g)local production and consumption.



Above: Mittal Steel's air cooled blast furnace slag and steel slag in Cleveland, 2006; flowers growing at Steelyard Commons

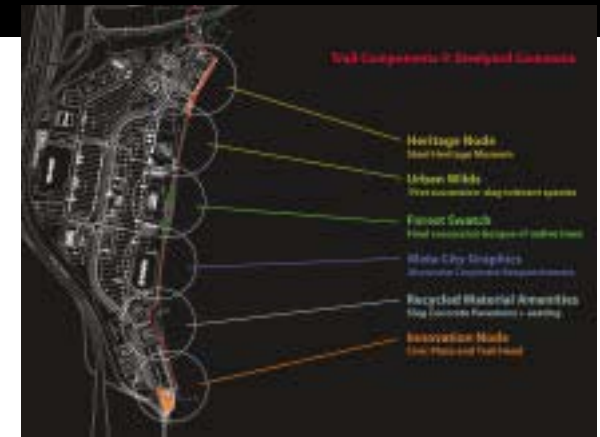
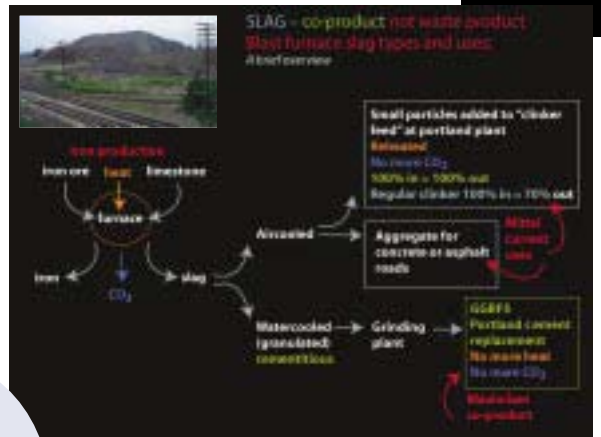
Right: Systems identified and utilized at the Steelyard Commons site

Flowers, other pages: Images courtesy of Don Harvey's Natural Flats project

Whitehead and Lisa Norton have made a major conceptual input into one of the key elements of the project—the ‘Steelyard Commons Segment.’ They saw and facilitated connections between organizations in Cleveland with an environmental investment in the success of the project, and in so doing created a new local network; they recognized the potential of slag, a waste material from iron and steel-making, as a usable construction material in rehabilitating the Towpath. Slag, turned into cement and concrete, is a good pavement material that is zero CO₂ emissions rated, as the emissions are credited to the iron or steel—this means that making “slag cement” has less environmental impact than manufacturing regular “portland cement.” Likewise they explored remedial landscape design, using slag together with river sediment and dung (from the local zoo) to create engineered soil as a growing medium in which to test plants and trees that will flourish on the site. So rather than seeing slag as the unsightly evidence of a history of steel-making, they viewed it as a resource able to be transformed into an attractive construction material.

Besides expanding perceptions of the nature of, and relations between, recycling, waste and resources, Whitehead and Norton also explored the potential of a new retail development; innovation and information hub; a super-graphics venue; public art and heritage content—all as elements of the segment to be encountered en route.

Problems and Potentialities. Clearly such projects have enormous potential if properly supported. They can be made socially participatory, instructive, celebratory



Trail Components at Steelyard Commons

Heritage Node

- Steel Heritage Museum
- Scenic Railway Stop
- Comfort Station
- Bottle Car Exhibit

Urban Wilds

- First succession species
- Test plots for slag tolerant plant propagation
- Washington Park Horticultural School
- Public volunteer involvement

Forest Swatch

- Late succession bosque of native trees
- Provide shade and punctuate experience
- Mound area for greater root capacity

Mega Graphics

- Maps, information systems
- Corporate responsibility viewed
- Public art opportunities

Slag Pavement

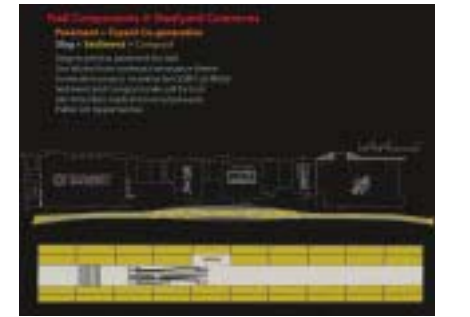
- Slag recycled as pavement for trail
- Use idioms from roadway/conveyance theme
- Generate economic incentive for GGBFS at Mittal
- Site amenities made from recycled waste
- Public art opportunities

Innovation Node

- Placemaking at south end
- Fork the road, literalize everyday choices
- Civic Exchange Kiosk
- Electronic interpretation and information hub
- Public art opportunities



Right: Test Plots form the "Tech Aesthetic"
Back Panels: Proposal details from the formal Steelyard Commons Proposal to the Towpath Trail Partnership Committee



Frances Whitehead is an artist working from a multi-faceted aesthetic and pedagogical position, a kind of deep practice that focuses on publicly engaged projects that aim to contribute to a sustainable future. She is a Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she has taught since 1985. The recipient of numerous grants and awards, including the NEA and the Tiffany Foundation, she has exhibited widely and worked with a multitude of trans-disciplinary teams in public practice.

Lisa Norton is an artist engaged in designing the common spaces that impact economies. Her work in public design focuses on creating markets, both traditional and alternative, for local resources. Norton's long-term projects, including current work in China, relate to the retrieval and re-codification of knowledge and local responses to globalization. Norton is a Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

List of Contributors

- Paul Alsenas, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
- Candace Bates, Ohio & Erie Canalway Association
- George Cantor, City of Cleveland Planning Commission
- Tim Donovan, Ohio Canal Corridor
- Brooke Furio, US Environmental Protection Agency
- Don Harvey, artist and activist
- James Kastelic, Cleveland Metroparks
- Richard Kerber, Cleveland Metroparks
- Stan Kosilesky, Cuyahoga County Engineer
- Sally Parker, Currere
- Greg Peckham, Cleveland Public Art
- Jan Prusinski, Slag Cement Association
- Steve Reese, Stein Inc.
- Rich Sicha, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
- Patty Stevens, Cleveland Metroparks
- Carol Thaler, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
- The Towpath Trail Partnership Committee
- Terry Wagaman, National Slag Association
- Andrew Watterson, Cleveland Sustainability Manager
- Jim White, Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan (RAP)
- Max Wolansky, Lafarge Cement
- Kevin Zak, First Interstate Corporation
- Richard Zavoda, Mittal Steel

SPACES WORLD ARTISTS PROGRAM

Since its inception in 2002, the SPACES World Artists Program has enabled meaningful interaction over time between visiting artists and the community. Inviting regional, national, and international artists to spend six weeks in Cleveland, SPACES' residency program supports the creation, exhibition, and discussion of the artists' work, and facilitates collaboration among artists, audiences, students, and area community organizations.

We wish to thank the alumni of the 2004-05 season. Their artistic creativity, commitment to their work, and inspirational stories expanded our notions of what can be accomplished through this program.

- Katarina Wong (New York, New York), Still Center, August 31 – October 15, 2004
- Katarina Sevic (Budapest, Hungary), Fictionary, November 19, 2004 – January 7, 2005
- Julian Montague (Buffalo, New York), The Shopping Cart Project: Cleveland and Environs, January 21 – March 11, 2005
- Roman Dziadkiewicz (Krakow, Poland), Robinson Crusoe or Stranger than Paradise, April 15 – June 10, 2005
- Renée Gertler (San Francisco, California), Arterial Change, June 23 – August 5, 2005

The fourth season continues to bring artists to SPACES to share their work and creative thinking with the community. Each six-week residency culminates with an exhibition of new work by the artist and an illustrated brochure about this work, with critical writing. Our goal is to sustain a year-round program that truly expands SPACES' support of artists and our communication with audiences, students, and the general community.

For major support of the SPACES World Artists Program, we are indebted to The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Cuyahoga County ACE grant, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Nimoy Foundation, and the Ohio Arts Council. We are also grateful for assistance from The Cleveland Foundation and The George Gund Foundation.



The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

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Jeff and Cynthia Chipelis, Julie Fehrenbach, Angelica Pozo, Kristen Rhodes, Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio, Susan Vincent, and John C. Williams.

SPACES

2220 Superior Viaduct
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-621-2314, phone and fax
info@spacesgallery.org
www.spacesgallery.org

Staff

- Sarah Beiderman, Residency Coordinator
- Susan R. Channing, Director
- Julie Fehrenbach, Associate Director
- Marilyn Ladd-Simmons, Gallery Manager
- Sarah Wildeman, Exhibition & Program Coordinator
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Mission

SPACES advances the artist's vision. By providing freedom, resources, and an audience, SPACES enables artists to engage the public in a vital dialogue about contemporary art. SPACES interacts directly with artists, promoting excellence and experimentation to produce challenging gallery exhibitions, public programs, residencies and publications. Throughout this project, SPACES and its events have been partially sponsored by memberships and support from American Greetings, Clarion Group, BBP Partners LLC, The Cleveland Foundation, Dodd Camera & Video, Education Lending Group, Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, Forest City Enterprises, The George Gund Foundation, Kulas Foundation, John P. Murphy Foundation, National City Bank, National Endowment for the Arts, Nimoy Foundation, Ohio Arts Council, The Plain Dealer, Process Creative Studios, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.