



Tishman Environment
and Design Center



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Preparing for Disaster & Disrupting Climate Injustice: Reflections on 2017-2018 Tishman

Environment & Design Grant

*By Jean Gardner, Associate Professor,
School of Constructed Environments,
Parsons*

A central concern of The Tishman Environment and Design Center is Disrupting Climate Injustice. We are shocked daily with unprecedented experiences of extreme weather and its devastating impacts. People, other animals, plants -- literally all life -- as well as the places, institutions, and communities we built to protect ourselves from the Elements and each other are being uprooted. Lives shattered. The Earth destroyed. The already vulnerable are hit hardest. In response to this unprecedented global upheaval of our world, Michelle DePass, then Director of The Tishman Environment & Design Center and Robert Kirkbride, Dean of the School of Constructed Environments, called on students and faculty: now is the time to act in the climate-changed world where we all already live. Not tomorrow but NOW!! responded to the "Call." [1] The Tishman Environment & Design Center

awarded me a grant to act on its mandate. What follows describes my response to this "Call" as well as thoughts from two dual degree SCE graduate students. I collaborated with them as the grant guidelines specified. The Fall of 2017 the three of us began meeting. We brainstormed. We found ourselves coming back again and again to the same realization. For many people, the facts alone of climate change are not galvanizing the needed action to stem the human-caused destructive tide of a warming Earth. Perhaps, we mused, the reason in part is our habit of separating ourselves from the non-human natural world. One of the shared cultural foundations of the modern industrialized world is our belief that the Earth is a dead resource for our consumption. We ignore our dependency for our very lives on the primal Elements - Earth, Air, Fire, Water. We are inextricably immersed in these Elements. Nor do we let ourselves recognize that the individual and collective consequences of our actions are affecting all that we hold dear, including our very selves. Will, Gisbel, and I asked, "How can we feel safe enough to recognize our buried fears about the climate changes we are experiencing. We are living in a world turned upside down by the very Elements we thought we had insulated ourselves from: fierce

winds, torrential waters, deadly mudslides and earthquakes, and raging, all-consuming fires. How can we, within our academic environment, engage the realities of everything we know being ripped away from us?"From our own personal experiences, we knew that answering the 'Call' of the Tishman Environment & Design Center meant confronting our own buried, devouring feelings of fear. Underlying our sensations are horror and deep sadness about the realities of Climate Change -- feelings that we have few places to collectively experience and express. These emotions can overwhelm us and ultimately leave us numb if we hide from them. The grant gave us the opportunity to create places to experience the realities of climate change.

**The Next Section
[and the next two
posts in this series]
describe events we
created for all
members
of the New School
University**

**as well as other
interested
communities.**

**The purpose of the
events:**

**to answer the 'Call'
by creating
environments**

**in which
participants could
fully experiencing**

**the forces we have
unleashed**

**by treating the Earth
as a resource**

**rather than the
source of all life.**

**And to explore
responses**

to the reality of our
climate-changed
world.

LOWER EAST SIDE & NEW SCHOOL- PARSONS COMMUNITY MEMBERS MEET TO PREP4TODAY



THE
NEW
SCHOOLTISHMAN ENVIRONMENT
AND DESIGN CENTER

Preparing for Today: Urgency, Engagement & Action in the Age of Uncertainty

Wednesday, October 25th

6:30 - 8:30pm

Wollman Hall

65 West 11th Street Room, Top Floor









New York City is not immune. Hurricanes. Fires. Scorching summers. Daily we are experiencing new climate realities as they emerge. Are we ready? Are you ready? Six years ago in October 2012, Hurricane Sandy blasted through all five boroughs, uprooting neighborhoods, flooding buildings, streets, and subways, leaving many without power, food, or clean water. The summer of 2017, alarmed that communities on Manhattan's Lower East Side were ill-prepared for disaster, Green Map Founder & President Wendy Brawer and I joined forces to Prepare for Disaster & Disrupt Climate Injustice. How? How? Working under the auspices of the Tishman Environment & Design Center at The New School and the

Stanton Building Task Force, a project of the Sara D. Roosevelt Park Coalition, Wendy and I organized a joint community workshop for October 25, 2017. Our objective: develop community-engaged prototypes for social resiliency in an underutilized park building. Our focus: take the next steps toward returning this former Lower East Side building to its community. Located at the north end of Sara D. Roosevelt Park in the center of lower Manhattan, the Stanton Building's potential is "an all-ages center for community wellbeing and social resiliency, with a community climate action lab, a navigation desk for homeless community members and an emergency hub for times of disruption." To prepare New School students for participating in the October workshop as facilitators, I took fifteen New School-Parsons students to meet Wendy, who is a 30-year resident of the Lower East Side. The students experienced for themselves LED activists, the Stanton Street Park Building and its immediate neighborhood. In the October workshop (pictured below) students engaged directly with community leaders and members discussing issues key to transforming the Stanton Building into a Community Disaster Preparedness Center. In the photo, a student, a community member, and

a community leader discuss Engaging Attention: Story Telling for Outreach and Inspiration, one of eight issues workshop attendees focused on. The other seven issues probed were 1) Civic-side: Policy, Social Equity, City Affairs; Function: 2) Building Interior & Exterior; 3) Programming: Climate action, homeless needs, emergency hub; 4) Prototyping: designing a new model for underutilized Park buildings across NYC; 5) Curriculum: how can schools participate through their courses; 6) Sanctuary: Our City, Schools & the Stanton Building as Sanctuary; 7) Funding: Foundations & Government grants, Income generation, crowd-funding. Several months after the Workshop, I asked Wendy Brawer what the Stanton Building Task Force of the Sara D. Roosevelt Park Coalition took away from the Workshop. "We saw the value of working collaboratively with a school. It gave us a diversity of opinion, planted seeds and was a model of cooperation for a common need." "For me," Wendy added, "the workshop underscored the need to develop the community climate action lab concept further, without assuming the Stanton Building would be the only place for the process of social resiliency engagement. It also led me to a deeper dive into related programs that are already in place in various NYC parks, and to

understand gaps in NYC's emergency planning and sustainability goals including OneNYC. The Stanton Building Task Force was also struck by how much distress and trauma came into the workshop discussions. We realized the social service 'desk' we had envisioned needed to be open to more than homeless people, and later, how the students' Speak-EZ at Parsons addressed this issue."

More in this series:

[Speak-EZ for Disrupting Climate Injustice](#) LISTENing to Earth

Sounds [Jean Gardner](#) *is an activist, writer, teacher, public speaker, and visionary on Design for a Living Earth. She is an Associate Professor of Social-Ecological History and Design, The School for Constructed Environments, Parsons School for Design.*



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