



East “River” Reverses: Becomes New York

We propose to use topographical signaling to performatively respond to one complete cycle of the East River’s reversals of flow—and to the spatial and temporal juxtapositions that result and inflect each other in passing.

We will use kayaks and banners as our signaling devices. We will anchor a flagged buoy (the point of reference buoy) near the DUMBO waterfront park. It will be close to shore, yet in the direct flow of the river’s tidal current. We will tether an orange double kayak (the signaling kayak) to the buoy. Over the course of six hours, the signaling kayak will transcribe a 180 degree arc around the anchored buoy as it signals, first the ebbing current, then the slack current, then the flooding current. As we ride the signaling kayak, we will unfurl successive banners throughout the six hours. The banners will offer audiences in the park our words of performative response to our lived experiences of the river’s reversal.

Throughout the duration of the signaling, we will also use various media (photography, video, film, audio recording, mapping, drawing), to performatively document how the tide current’s reversal looks, moves, sounds, feels, unfolds, interacts when it is addressed as being in a relationship of reciprocal variation with the city as movement and flow of people, forces, and objects. We will use the kayak’s movement to signal the exquisitely intense confluence of forces in and of this place. We will signal and document how those forces make this river/estuary/tidal strait a singular, exemplary transverse flow of and within the city—one that puts directional flows of people and objects into unexpected, reciprocal variation with each other.

Our intention is to offer a public audience a dynamic experience of transverse flows in and as the city. Through this, we intend to set up potentials for public audiences to imagine *new forms of relationality to be lived and, therefore, for public space to emerge elsewhere and otherwise.*

Our work sets in motion experiences of public space that enable us to generate dynamic images of what is immanent in public space and what public space might yet become.

Our interest in working in the public realm is driven by questions at the heart of our art practice: What new embodiments and instantiations of public space might be released through an aesthetic practice that emphasizes the human, built, and natural flows and movements that compose public spaces? How have public spaces been designed to "stage" and "channel" certain types of experiences with and of the built environment and natural landscape, as well as with the humans who are present? How might public spaces and those who we "meet" there be experienced in unexpected ways, and as "becoming else" with each encounter?

Our collaborative art practice consists of addressing public places, their landscapes, and audiences of our work, as in the making—as continuously becoming else. As we enact this address, we use various media to document how "we", "the public" and "public space" look, sound, feel and move when they encounter such an address. We do not attempt to capture, frame, or encode what we make of and through our practice. We instead use media to release—to open passageways from the fixed to the emergent, and to allow exchanges between what is already made and what is immanent.

We have witnessed how people act and move with increased senses of mobility and potential when they encounter or witness our mode of address as artistic practice. We believe that aesthetic experiences of what this address makes visible and sense-able have potential to engender new actions and flows of exchange in public spaces. We offer such aesthetic experiences to public audiences as generative matrices of social relationalities that have yet to be lived.

Our work is "successful" to the degree that we and public audiences enjoy and creatively respond to the felt experience of addressing public space, and being addressed in public space by others, not as already known, but as in the making.

We propose to publicly address the East River in DUMBO not as "staged public space" framed by park views, but as layered transversals of "invisible" forces that are continuously becoming city (underwater tunnels; reversing tidal currents; traffic above, around, over, under; ocean; moon).

This site-specific project affords a unique opportunity to directly experience the exquisite intensity of New York City's continuous emergence through a little known but astounding event that takes place four times each day: the reversal of the direction of the East River's flow.

The East River, one of the city's moving topographical edges, is in a constant state of becoming else. Sometimes simultaneously, other times successively, it "is" a river, a tidal strait and a tidal estuary. What we often mistake to be a river consists of an exquisitely intense confluence of complexly intersecting, interacting, multiplying forces and dynamics.

The fact that the East River reverses direction four times a day is of momentous consequence to New York City's continuous emergence as city. The effects of these reversals intimately shape movements, flows, and felt experiences of inhabitants and visitors of the city and its landscape. And yet they easily go unnoticed.

In our past work in various locations, we have use topographical signaling as a means to render forces of emergence visible and palpable, and to make their arrivals, intensities, rhythms, speeds, and their reciprocal effects sense-able.