



## APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis:      Remnants, Reminders, Ghosts, and Continuities: Walking a Shimmering Landscape

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## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: REMNANTS, REMAINDERS, GHOSTS, AND  
CONTINUITIES: WALKING A SHIMMERING LANDSCAPE.

Nicole Josephine Ringel, M.F.A., 2019

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“Remnants, Reminders, Ghosts, and Continuities: Walking a Shimmering Landscape” excavates the invisible histories in the landscape of Hollins Market, Baltimore, and presents two means of investigating this place. The first is a text, image, and found object installation at the Center for Art Design and Visual Culture. The second, a site-specific, self-guided walking tour of Hollins Market, was launched on April 13, 2019 at the Lions Brothers Company Building. In this written thesis, I will chart the methodologies I employed as I investigated histories within, and my relationship to, the landscape of Southwest Baltimore. My narration both offers observations and poses questions in order to facilitate a method of not only seeing, but being, belonging, and experiencing wonder within concrete spaces. By literally mapping this process, and by staging actual interactions with the places I have navigated, I invite viewers to begin their own process of situating, discovering, and placing themselves in shared space.

REMNANTS, REMAINDERS, GHOSTS, AND CONTINUITIES:  
WALKING A SHIMMERING LANDSCAPE.

By

Nicole Josephine Ringel.

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
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## Preface

**“A volcanist explained the nature of love to me. He said, you love what you get to know, what you pay attention to and therefore become more aware of. This is not a passive form of love. This is how I feel about the volcano.”**

-Illana Halperlin, 2008<sup>1</sup>

We live in the midst of a dark time. The global turn to the right leaves us grasping for change that seems to exist at an impossible distance. As our planet warms, the eyes of those in power focus intently on capital, economy, growth, and the ever-quickenning treadmill of so-called “progress.” In the midst of global turmoil, macro perspectives of the multitude of social, economic, and environmental issues are paralyzing, their scale deadening. In this work, I have responded to these issues in the tradition of many artists, following what Lucy Lippard has called “The Lure of the Local.”

I have followed my own footsteps in an issue-ridden area of an issue-ridden city. I have attempted to excavate moments of hope in a ruined landscape, while maintaining both attention to the history and context of the Southwest Baltimore neighborhood I have lived and worked in, and transparency regarding my own privileged identity within that space. I have grounded myself in the material with which I’ve interacted. I have worked for belonging and being in my body and place. I have documented my process of reckoning present, past, and body,<sup>2</sup> so that I may instigate moments in which viewers and participants are able to do the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Illana Halperlin, “Geologic Intimacy/Physical Geography,” *Experimental Geography: Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography, and Urbanism*, ed. Nato Thompson (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2008), 53.

<sup>2</sup> In the introduction to *The Lure of the Local*, Lucy Lippard urges readers to “locate” themselves, so they may examine their relationship to, power within, and belonging to place. She asserts that within a

There is still something worth fighting for, there are still moments of unpredictable resilience, like microscopic universes that glisten with symbiotic beauty. Tiny plots of immortal lichen, millions of species of fungi in our homes we've yet to discover – only a few examples of forces that dwell with blooming might in the midst of the legacy of redlining, of systematic racism and neglect, expected and often accepted mismanagement and corruption, bureaucratic violence, widespread isolation, and entire neighborhoods drowning in disrepair. I am not unaware of these problems. I chart my own reckoning with these systemic issues as I excavate moments of hope. I share my own journey, reaching for embodied understanding in an attempt to facilitate a feeling of connectivity to the spaces we share, in the midst of systemic violence. In the face of so much dysfunction, I have looked for glistening beacons of life and curiosity. I have located and nurtured love for tiny bits of life-force within damaged landscapes. I share my own reflections, journeys, and love for certain areas as an invitation for viewers and participants to look at, touch, smell, and move through space with attention, intention, and presence.

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multicentered society, her recommendation is a challenging task to assume. Lucy Lippard, "All Over the Place," *The Lure of the Local* (New York: The New York Press, 1997), ##.



## Dedication

To my constellation of supporting bodies, who constantly remind me that the world always holds more to look closely at.

## Acknowledgements

This entire process would not have been possible without the generous support of so many friends, family members, colleagues, and mentors. My sister Renee, as well as the helping hands and words of Caroline Unger, Greg Wilson, Samantha Brekosky, Taylor Sabatano, and Noelle Gorman were monumental as this work was brought into being.

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My committee members have also been incredibly supportive, challenging, and insightful along the way. Tim Nohe has taken time and care to ask and consider nuanced, probing questions that have shed new light upon the significance of what I make. Sarah Sharp has always had a profound ability to reach into my work and locate its precise moment of power and significance. Her insight has been invaluable to me for all of my three years of graduate school. Mark Durant's sensitivity to the power of images and artist gestures, and his ability to articulate their immense significance, has deepened and given language to so many of my ideas about art, being, and the world.

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## Introduction

Looking at the materials that make up the most banal urban scenery, I find myself presented with the echoes of human systems. The concrete that paves our roads is largely composed of millennia-old rock, which is ground and processed into new avenues that guide movement through a structured and controlled landscape.<sup>3</sup> Touching a railing, I'm aware of the DNA of skin cells that have been left behind. When rain runs through roadways, down sewer drains and out to larger bodies of water, I watch it carry our littered refuse. When buildings are repurposed, condemned, sold, developed, or demolished, they leave behind tangible memories and fragmented blocks. I witness human and non-human systems at work when I dwell with and contemplate the remnants, remainders, ghosts, and continuities that cover, alter, and transform the material that constitutes urban space.

My thesis exhibition offers two translations of observed details, researched history, and traced paths I have gathered over the past year in Hollins Market, Baltimore. The information exists in my sketchbooks and maps as an archive of converging personal, historical, and ecological narratives I have witnessed, uncovered, dwelled among, and woven together. These details manifest as both a site-specific walking experience in Hollins Market, and an installation at the Center for Art Design and Visual Culture at UMBC.

First, I will define my approach to shimmering landscape, and follow with a description of the form of the walking experience and the installation. I will then proceed to a discussion of: the process by which I have selected and generated the areas in question; and specific parts of the

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<sup>3</sup> In her book *Undermining*, Lucy Lippard tracks the production of concrete to the American Southwest, keenly bringing attention to the process by which geological records are mined to produce urban spaces such as New York City, which requires the equivalent of the amount of concrete it took to construct the Hoover Dam each month to sustain it. Thus, Lippard demonstrates that urban space is constructed with illegible geology.

work exemplifying the taxonomy of remnants, remainders, ghosts, and continuities that I have constructed. The two appendices document the development of my past work, which applied the metaphor of the palimpsest to urban surfaces, in the hope that the material substance of faded street signs, cracked concrete, graffitied roadways, assemblages of detritus, repurposed infrastructure, and countless other unexpected combinations might reveal past and present human forces that define the architecture, use, accessibility, and sustainability of our landscape.

## Shimmering Forms

*There's this idea of shimmer, that as you move through a space, time and light cross paths in unique serendipity. Sometimes I'm drawn to the most minute of details: the speckled patches of sand in the road, between the tar-coated rocks. I see the splits in the asphalt and imagine the tectonic shifts of the crust of the earth, pulling and tearing at concrete structures. There's this idea of shimmer, that light and time show small and large bits of places in varying degrees, perpetually changing with movement. I see tiny ant colonies moving sugary waste and speckled plant matter with tiny hair-like arms... how many worlds exist within this alley?*

Figure 1. Excerpt from walking tour

Shimmer is corporeal. Shimmer is relative, it is embodied, it is human. Shimmer is the thrill of the moment of discovery – shimmer is a burst of light. Shimmer shows us what we had yet to discover. Shimmer sparks curiosity, it shouts and whispers histories and forces of epic and microscopic scales. Shimmer is the way landscape is sensed: never as a whole; rather, it is perceived in parts, in minutiae that glisten as perception moves through space. With movement, the angles and intensity of light shift in their relationship to the perceiver's body – a sparkle occurs. In the most literal sense, movement shifts paradigms; movement generates shimmer.<sup>4</sup> The forms presented in my thesis work reach for a heightened focus and intention within this perception and movement in order to explore (the often invisible) histories and ecologies housed upon urban surfaces. In both the walking experience and the installation, proximity and movement – and, therefore, shimmer – determine legibility.

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<sup>4</sup> Alex Garland's 2018 film adaptation of Jeff VanderMeer's 2014 novel *Annihilation* presents "The Shimmer" as a science-fiction non-space in which time, light, DNA, and other physical phenomena are refracted, creating a chaotic, unpredictable world. While this representation is an intriguing investigation into the conceptualization of refracted bodies, the definition of shimmer I offer predates my knowledge of the trilogy and is far less ominous in its conception and function.

## Walking Experience

The walking experience portion of my thesis work is a self-guided audio tour, which was launched on April 13, 2019, at the Lion Brothers Company Building in Hollins Market, Baltimore. The tour itself is a mobile application that uses street signs, water meters, and other city surfaces as markers to cue an audio narrative, spoken in my own voice. With provided headphones and a guidebook, participants were invited to follow a map and instructions to locate each marker and hold their device as if they were taking a picture of it. When the camera recognized the marker, my voice played over their headphones, instructing participants to explore, touch, smell; take actions such as sitting on curbs and collecting objects; and listen to my voice recount human and non-human histories.

The tour has four main sites: Boyd Street, which lies directly alongside the Lions Brothers Building; Little Lithuania Park and Lithuanian Hall, which hold enduring organisms that reveal whispers of an ecological future in the midst of industrial past; Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, whose construction in the early 1980s embodied and enforced division between downtown and southwest neighborhoods;<sup>5</sup> and the intersection of Baltimore and Arlington Streets, which was once the site of a tributary that led to the Chesapeake Bay.

I was initially drawn to the walking tour format because of the capacity of artist tours to activate invisible histories within functional spaces. Artists and artist groups such as Janett Cardiff and George Bures Miller, The Center for Land Use Interpretation, Los Angeles Urban Rangers, and others draw from the lineage of Andrea Fraser's work, *Museum Highlights* (1989), in which Fraser posed as a fictional lecturer and academic as she guided visitors through the

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed account of the ways in which the construction of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and other highways enforced the legacy of redlining and segregation, see Tavani Misra, "The Other Side of MLK Boulevard," *City Lab* (2018), accessed December 5, 2018.



museum space and exposed the institutionalized elitism inherent to the Philadelphia Museum of Art institution.<sup>6</sup> I was drawn to the format of the artist-tour because of its ability to place participants in the actuality of the places in question. Rather than rely on representations or abstractions, artist tours have the capacity to facilitate specific interactions with the world outside of the pseudo-blank canvas of the white cube gallery space. While Fraser's tour was overtly critical and performative,<sup>7</sup> I am interested in implementing a more subtle, inviting role in order to instigate personal interactions with the visible and invisible phenomena that imbricate public space.

Janett Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012) achieved a quietly intimate experience of public space akin to what I seek in my project.<sup>8</sup> While experiencing that work, the viewer is presented with two "realities" of the location simultaneously – the augmented version housed in the device, and the lived one, carried out through the participant's attempts to follow the video's perspective. Art historian Christine Ross pointed out in an analysis of Cardiff and Miller's "video walk" that "movement is both an action and a medium through which what has been forgotten about a place is emotionally felt by the participant rather than disclosed, represented, or deconstructed by the work."<sup>9</sup> The ecological and historical details of Hollins Market that I narrate in the tour are delivered in the midst of the

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Alberro, *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, "Introduction," The MIT Press (Cambridge: 2007).

<sup>7</sup> My previous project, *The Museum of Contemporary Palimpsest* implemented a performative, pseudo-institutional tour guide role. For a more detailed analysis of this work, see Appendix II.

<sup>8</sup> The work consisted of a hand-held augmented reality video, which participants carried through the Alter Bahnhof train station in Kassel, Germany, as it played. The narration remarks on various sensations of the train station, such as perceived attitudes of passersby, and instructs the viewer to move throughout the station by attempting to match their point of view to that of the video as closely as possible.

<sup>9</sup> Christine Ross, "Movement That Matters Historically: Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's 2012 *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*," *Discourse* 35, No. 3 (2013): 214.

participant's own corporeal experience of the area. Thus, the work facilitates an embodied dialectic of past and present.

## Installation

The installation on view at the CAVDC is an assemblage of large-format inkjet and silkscreened prints, found objects, and bricks assembled into a multidimensional mapping of the ghosts, remnants, remainders, and continuities I will describe shortly.

Upon walking into the gallery, viewers approach a map of Hollins Market resting on a structure composed of stacked bricks. The map itself was drawn by the Sanborn Map Company<sup>10</sup> in 1953, before highway development projects redefined the city's structure. Lying over the map is a translucent layer of drafting paper, onto which I have drawn details concerning city development both prior to and following the date of the map's creation. The combination of these layers creates a multi-temporal representation of the neighborhood and its surrounding area.

Behind the table, black screen prints on black paper lay on brick structures of varying heights. Each print features circular images of various sizes that document details of landscapes featured on the Sanborn map. The images represent micro details from the four main sites of the tour: Boyd Street, Little Lithuania Park, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard between Baltimore and Lombard, and the intersection of Baltimore and Arlington Streets. The circular images are tied together with a singular line of curving text, which narrates sensations and observations of each tour site.

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<sup>10</sup> Sanborn maps of Baltimore (1867 – 1970) are available online through the Enoch Pratt Free Library. While they were first drafted for insurance companies to assess fire liability, their detailed recollection of the various iterations of over 12,000 American cities are invaluable to historians, artists, and other researchers.

In order to see the work clearly, viewers must grapple with scale, relative distance, movement, and touch. The black ink is nearly invisible at certain angles; however, when viewers locate the proper angle, the prints glisten in full legibility. Bricks connect each structure together, simulating the grid of city blocks and determining gallery visitors' travel paths, while the undulating curves of the text evoke a sense of organic wandering between angular structures.

On the two walls on either side of the brick structures hang two layers of mylar paper. The top layer is printed with circular photographs, while a curving line of text is printed on the paper underneath, as if it were wandering between and around each of the photographs. From a distance, the text is visible, but not discernable. Viewers are invited to use a fingertip to lightly press the top layer down so that it touches the bottom layer, which reveals the text in full legibility.<sup>11</sup>

The circular photographs vary in scale: large images require the viewer to stand at a distance to view them; small ones require intimate closeness. While each photograph documents tiny forms at each site, the circular shape of each photograph echoes representations of celestial bodies, shifting senses of scale to an even greater degree.

By heightening the impact of reflection, movement, touch, and scale, the installation replicates and brings attention to the multi-sensory process by which details in landscape enter perception. Similarly, artist Skye Gilkerson creates immersive experiences in which celestial and corporeal scales are grappled with simultaneously. Her work *There and Back* (2017-18) is a collection of objects the artist gathered as she walked 124 miles – twice the distance from sea

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<sup>11</sup> Ann Hamilton used a similar technique in her project *ONE EVERYONE* (2012-present), in which viewers are photographed as they stand behind a translucent material, which they may lightly press against. The areas of the visitors' bodies that are closest to the membrane are captured in perfect focus, while the surrounding areas are left in frosted blur. I was first made aware of this work during the artist's talk at Goucher College, Baltimore, MD, in the spring of 2017.

level to the Kármán Line, the theorized border between the atmosphere of Earth and outer space. The objects are arranged in a spiral, such that viewers may walk along the line as it circles in on itself. Upon reaching the end of the spiral, viewers must return along the same path.<sup>12</sup> The work is a sort of experiential diagram in which celestial scale is explored through navigation, movement, and concrete objects.<sup>13</sup>

Central to the viewing experience of my work is the process of reading. In an artist talk I attended in 2017, artist Ann Hamilton described the sensation of reading as one that is “both intimate and grand.”<sup>14</sup> The process of reading traverses the boundary between what is you, and what is not you. Text, housed in shared space, becomes embodied and, therefore, unique – ideas scrawled upon a page enter consciousness and become intimate to each perceiver. In my installation, the “intimacy and grandness” of reading manifests in the concrete – reading physically moves each viewer through the gallery space.

By manipulating legibility<sup>15</sup> via proximity, movement, touch, and precise reflection of light, I have attempted to bring heightened focus and reciprocation to the process wherein my narration and imagery are transmitted to the consciousness of each viewer. Viewers must wander around the black-on-black screen prints to locate the precise angle in which they become visible, and they must touch the words on the mylar prints to read them. By facilitating the corporeal

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.skyegilkerson.com/other-work#/thereandback/> accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Gilkerson’s work brings to mind Robert Smithson’s famed *Spiral Jetty* (1970). Smithson’s investigations were honed around entropy: time’s forward progression towards an equilibrium of dissolution and chaos. I am interested in what we can witness in the wake of entropy. The bodies and materials present in shared landscapes – especially urban ones – are a result of the continued progress of both creation and destruction. What might be found if half-things are looked for?

<sup>14</sup> Ann Hamilton, artist’s talk, Goucher College, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Artist Glenn Ligon uses screen printing, paint, stencils, and layering to quote and/or obscure the words of writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Gertrude Stein, and others in order to investigate American cultural perceptions surrounding race, sexuality, and identity. While his conceptual aims are far different from mine, his work has been profoundly influential to me.

interaction of each viewer's body and the narratives I have presented, I attempt to nurture closeness, attention, and care.

## Corporeal Imaginations

There is the outlined square of a street block on a map;  
here is the kinesthetic tracing of that periphery with my body.

There is a physical description of a concrete barrier;  
here is the anxiety of finding it blocking my path.

There is a hypothetical recognition of Baltimore's failing infrastructure;  
here is witnessing a mountain of refuse lining a storm drain.

There is a belief in the importance of protecting ecological systems;  
here is a tender celebration of flora bursting through concrete.

Figure 2: There/here excerpt from walking tour<sup>16</sup>

When I look at the actuality of physical places, like the concrete beneath my feet, I am faced with surprising, perplexing, unexpected phenomena, some as small as a millimeter of lichen, and find them as commanding as a roadway. When I see a tree bursting through a chain link fence, stretching and breaking its metal clutches, I see a resurgence of an uncalculated force. Remnants, remainders, ghosts, and continuities form urban palimpsests<sup>17</sup> that act as evidence of the shortsightedness of human systems — the past and present of which converge in overlapping spaces.

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<sup>16</sup> Linguists Karl Bühler and William Labov studied three modes of deixis: *ad oculos*, the context of the perceiver's sensory environment; *anaphoria*, the context of discourse as a structured environment; and *deixis at phantasma*, the context of memory and imagination. Their investigation of the signification of words that cannot be fully understood without conceptual "placing" (such as "here" and "there") is relevant to my work, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix I for a history and theorization of the relevance of the palimpsest in urban space.

I began my journey with my body, wandering through streets, parks, alleyways, and voids. I look at my feet when I walk. I look at the sidewalks and what lays in them, I look at the walls and feel what is growing on them, I walk around them. I look for half-things. I rely on my senses. I ask questions.<sup>18</sup> I am interested in the breaths I inhale and release as I walk. I think of Elizabeth Povinelli's observation in her book *Geontologies*: "Human lungs are constant reminders that separation is imaginary."<sup>19</sup>

Micro forms of life speak to the sheer mass of unknowable moments housed on both the surface of our planetary structure, and the surface of human skin. The difference is not always discernable. Skin boundaries are illusive. Skin is a permeable membrane that absorbs and releases molecules within an ever-fluctuating ecology. And, in fact, these non-boundaries are not solely human. As Jane Bennett pointed out in her book *Vibrant Matter*:

My flesh is populated and constituted by different swarms of foreigners. The crook of my elbow, for example, is "a special ecosystem, a bountiful home to no fewer than six tribes of bacteria. . . . They are helping to moisturize the skin by processing the raw fats it produces. . . ." [I]t is thus not enough to say that we are "embodied." We are, rather, *an array of bodies*, many different kinds of them in a nested set of microbiomes [author's emphasis].<sup>20</sup>

Thus, corporeal boundaries are misleading. Micro-universes of commensals (invisible-to-human-eye bacteria that provide essential, life-sustaining functions) and other life-forms are known to

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<sup>18</sup> A parallel may be drawn here between my practice of walking to gather sensorial content, and the *dérive*, or spontaneous wandering, of the Situationist International (SI), whose theory of "psychogeography" critiqued modernist urban infrastructure in Paris. Beginning in the early 1950s, Guy Debord and other SI artists employed the *dérive* as a mode of exploring the possibilities of movement within what they perceived as a structured, controlled, and systematized landscape. While my wanderings have a similar aim – to increase awareness of the interplay between my senses and the urban constructions I find myself within – I am interested in excavating context, and nurturing belonging. Urban space is not a stage in my work – it is a fluctuating ecosystem in which I am a breathing body. Claire Bishop, "Je Participe, Tu Participes, Il Participe..." *Artificial Hells*, (London: Verso, 2012), 77 – 78.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 42.

<sup>20</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 40. Bennett quotes Nicholas Wade, "Bacteria Thrive in Inner Elbow; No Harm Done," *New York Times*, May 23, 2008.

inhabit Earth's surface with enduring tenacity. We live in the midst of interdependence as unknowable as the scope of the universe. Scientists have only begun to document these worlds – their makeup must be imagined.<sup>21</sup> Povinelli presented the term “epidermal imaginary” to encompass the vast, yet mortally intimate micro-worlds housed on the epidermis of human and terrestrial bodies.<sup>22</sup> Ecologist and philosopher David Abram articulated a similar thought:

Once I acknowledge that my own sentience, or subjectivity, does not preclude my visible, tactile, objective existence for others, I find myself forced to acknowledge that *any* visible, tangible form that meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it, and to me.<sup>23</sup>

By following senses, by engaging with and nurturing kinship for the epidermal imaginary, for all that is *not* us, we may begin to formulate an identity based on our integral union with, rather than separation from, our surrounding ecology. This model of formulating identity exists on the margins of ideologies that define and carve up our land with borders, bases, boundaries, and dollar signs. I attempt to activate an epidermal imaginary by sharing my own wonderings about where life may be unfolding, by bringing attention to the process by which sensation is experienced, and by inviting participants to wonder about and imagine scientific, yet invisible life-forces. In Abram's words,

Manhattan could not exist without its grounding amid the waters with their tidal surges. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Los Angeles awaken, often enough, to the trembling power of their own terrain. To return to our senses is to renew our bond with this wider life, to feel the soil beneath the pavement, to sense – even when indoors – the moon's gaze upon the roof.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Rob Dunn, Professor of Applied Ecology at North Carolina State University, explained, in conversation with NPR host Terry Gross, that “Every surface, every bit of air; every bit of water in your home is alive. The average house has thousands of species.” Robb Dunn and Terry Gross, “Counting the Bugs and Bacteria, ‘You’re Never Home Alone’ (And That’s OK),” *WYPR*, November 12, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Povinelli, “Can Rocks Die?” *Geontologies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 51.

<sup>23</sup> David Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, (New York: Random House, 1996), 67.

<sup>24</sup> David Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 273.



Baltimore itself is indebted to the life-forces, tides, and currents of the Chesapeake Bay. By imagining and wondering about the scope of non-human presences, I begin to kindle a sense of mutualism and closeness within the pluriverse<sup>25</sup> of unknown, unfolding ecologies.

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<sup>25</sup> Donna Haraway uses this term in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* to describe the interplay of macro and micro ecologies that make up our world.

## Remnants, Remainders, Ghosts, and Continuities

**“Our era of human destruction has trained our eyes only on the immediate promises of power and profits. This refusal of the past, and even the present, will condemn us to continue fouling our own nests.”<sup>26</sup>**

-Anna Tsing, 2017

This journey unfolds in the wreckage of the Anthropocene,<sup>27</sup> an epoch bearing the scars of human activities. It is an era in which the shortsightedness of human systems is exposed, and the echoes of past decisions resurface with unexpected and unintended consequences.<sup>28</sup>

As we attempt to secure our bearings in this new world of human-induced climate change, precarious water security, and mass extinction, we see the present unfolding as a result of past human choices. Our plastic packaging gathers in massive islands in an acidifying ocean, reemerging on our planetary surface like the oxidation of text emerged upon a seventh-century palimpsest manuscript – the latter, of course, with far, far fewer consequences.

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<sup>26</sup> Anna Tsing et al., ed., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), G2.

<sup>27</sup> The term “Anthropocene,” popularized by atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen in 2000, cites massive extinction rates and the chemical alteration of the earth’s ocean and atmosphere as reason to distinguish an end to the 11,700 year reign of the Holocene. While scientists are still in disagreement over the validity of the term (Donna Haraway and others have astutely suggested “Capitalocene” as an alternative), I use it here to acknowledge the crippling scale of the alterations human activities have inflicted upon earth systems. Joseph Stromberg, “What is the Anthropocene and are we in It?,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed 25 March 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/what-is-the-anthropocene-and-are-we-in-it-164801414/>.

<sup>28</sup> In September of 2018, the Trump administration issued a report projecting the earth to warm seven degrees by 2100, but refused to create policy to address it. The overwhelming majority of climate change fatalities, and extreme, climate change-induced weather events occur in the Global South. Those most vulnerable to climate change threats are those in poverty worldwide. One may argue, in the flat refusal of northern governments to address or combat climate catastrophe, it is not a matter of “unintended consequences,” rather, it is the result of the calculated, nefarious decisions of global leaders.

What we see is a world in which the artificial boundaries we have set between lands, processes, and entities are blurred in a vast web of connectivity. On a molecular human level, the separateness between a body and its environment is optic alone. Human bodies are permeable membranes, as just discussed, absorbing and releasing atoms and molecules within ecologic systems.

By facing, contemplating, researching, and activating the remnants, remainders, and ghosts of human systems, I attempt to chart my embodied experience of human and nonhuman forces at work in this epoch of the Anthropocene, starting at the local level – specifically, within Hollins Market. As I conducted this research, walking and investigating, I created a taxonomy of palimpsest surfaces: remnants, remainders, ghosts, and continuities.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> While these categories overlap in complex ways, it was helpful for me to draw these distinctions as a means of establishing clear modes of interpreting the sites in question.

## Ghosts

*Here lies an opening to what was once a powerful tributary leading out to the Chesapeake. Now, that water is directed beneath the surface. That water is now a ghost stream. Face the open greenery lot on the edge of the University of Maryland campus. There is a narrow dirt path running diagonally through it. Let's walk along it together. Take care to look at your steps as you go — what dwells here? As I walk this desire line, I think about the power of treading human footsteps. Like water carving organic thoroughways in forests, canyons, and hillsides, our steps beat pathways into this earth.*

Figure 3: Excerpt from walking tour

At the corners of Baltimore and Arlington streets, two open green lots, a University of Maryland campus building, and a row of retail buildings converge on the surface of what was once an estuary leading to the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. The tapering, organic twists and turns of the stream did not match the organized grid laid out by the city planner, geographer, and artist Thomas Poppleton, who was commissioned to draw a map and development plan for the city in 1822. As the city grew, highly polluted streams were largely rerouted into underground drainage systems, stripping the surface of the waterways that had, at one point, supported the city's agricultural needs. Now, that waterway is considered a ghost stream. It is directed through underground piping systems that separate it from surface ecologies and remove it from collective space. Its traces – ghostly and embodied – exist on the surfaces of geological maps, under storm drains, and in grids of underground tunnels beneath our feet. Ecologists say a ghost stream is:

A waterway that planning officials have decided should not be a stream anymore. Engineers route the flow through culverts and pipes. Then, they simply pave over the engineered channel, building a road or highway. What was once an open stream becomes hidden. In Baltimore, the Jones Falls, a Patapsco River tributary, is one of the largest buried streams in Maryland; much of it sits under Interstate 83.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rona Kobell. "A Buried Stream Runs Under It," *Chesapeake Quarterly*, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://www.chesapeakequarterly.net/V17N2/main5/>.

As Anna Tsing points out in her book *The Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, ghosts are actants. Ghosts haunt, intervening in our ecologies with unintended consequences. “They don’t sit still. They leave traces; they disturb our plans. They crack through pavements. They tell us about stretches of ancient time and contemporary layerings of time, collapsed together in landscapes.”<sup>31</sup>

The concrete-laden site of Baltimore and Arlington is now the haunting of a ghost stream. Hauntings emerge via polluted, over-fertilized water. Without plants to consume and filter its nutrients, concrete-encased water follows an expedited path directly into the Chesapeake Bay, and contributes to ongoing pollution issues. As stated in a recent *Chesapeake Quarterly* article:

Insects no longer hatch their eggs in the stream, decreasing their populations and depriving some fish of an important food source. A natural, meandering stream with vegetation and natural banks can remove nutrients and sediment from runoff on its way to larger rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. But in a buried stream, the concrete acts like a chute; rushing water from runoff, often filled with fertilizer, enters the waterways at a rapid rate. With no plants to take it up and no natural banks to slow the flow down, it carries these pollutants straight to the Bay.<sup>32</sup>

The impervious, concrete surfaces that encase waterways and block their natural paths also contribute to increased flooding, and an increasingly precarious water continuum. The past resurges into the present. Haunting predecessors warn of unintended consequences. And yet, life endures. Silver eels, after spending over ten years in the falls, migrate through the underground concrete tunnels that were once the Jones Falls river to journey back to their breeding grounds in the Sargasso Sea.<sup>33</sup> As Stan Kemp, the director of the sustainability program at the University of Baltimore, has pointed out, it is an incredible feat of adaptability and life that the eels are able to

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<sup>31</sup> Tsing, Anna et al., ed. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017, G8.

<sup>32</sup> Rona Kobel, “A Buried Stream Runs Under It,” *The Chesapeake Quarterly*, accessed October 10, 2018, <http://www.chesapeakequarterly.net/V17N2/main5/>.

<sup>33</sup> John Lee, “Fighting for the Falls: Look but Don’t Touch the Jones Falls,” *WYPR*, accessed February 15, 2019, <http://www.wypr.org/post/fighting-falls-look-dont-touch-jones-falls>.

complete their journey through the desolate tunnels. He notes, “How do they know it’s going to end? It must be pitch black, you know?”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

## Remainders

*Last time I was here, I found a broken ornament, made of a recycled clothes pin. It had a smiling face scrawled into the surface, a green pom-pom ball glued to the top, and addressed “Merry Christmas, Tomous” on the back. I almost picked it up, but I didn’t. I’ve been watching it for a few weeks, wondering if I should make it my own, or wait for Tomous to find it. How many worlds exist in this alley?*

Figure 4: Excerpt from walking tour

Every day that I walk down Hollins Street (or nearly anywhere in Baltimore), I am faced with assemblages of the unwanted. On one occasion, this included empty Jell-O cups, liquor bottles, cigarette butts, a pile of crab shells, an artificial flower, and a handmade Christmas ornament. These tiny bits of object waste are, to me, remainders. I encounter each remainder as it journeys along its own trajectory; its travel path intersects mine, and I imagine where it has been, and where it is going. I encounter remainders of human stories, experiences, ways of living. I encounter remainders of an infrastructure that does not allocate municipal needs equally.<sup>35</sup> I encounter the remainders of a throwaway culture, in which cheap, seemingly everlasting, single-use plastic objects travel freely along roadways and through waterways, where they dwell for centuries before breaking down into micro bits of everlasting, poisonous, artificial rubble. These narratives are simultaneously riveting and horrifying. In these objects, I see a capacity to imagine crossings-of-paths between human and nonhuman narratives. I see the discarded ornament and think warmly about who it may have belonged to, and the happenstance

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<sup>35</sup> Writer and academic D. Watkins witnessed this at work when he moved out of a black East Baltimore neighborhood to the predominately white Fells Point. He wrote: “I’d wait to around midnight and take a large, full trash bag out to the front of my house, cut it open and dump its contents all over the street. Then we’d smoke, drink, club, or whatever, but by 2 or 3am, all of the trash would be gone. The city would come through and pick up everything, leaving the front of my house squeaky clean. Then I’d do the same thing with a bag of trash in the black neighbourhood closest to Bolton Hill called Marble Hill. And the trash would sit.” D. Watkins, *The Beast Side: Living and Dying While Black in America*, (New York: Hot Books, 2016).

that our paths have crossed, paths unified within fleeting time and geography. In this way of looking at the concrete objects that I find, I learn about the landscape, in all its unpredictable, human and non-human, wonder.

These items are evidence of the shortcomings of human systems — they are what is left over, not unaccounted for; they are what slip through figurative fingers, down literal storm drains, and out to an acidifying sea.<sup>36</sup> My work attempts to remind viewers and participants that remainders are an invitation to investigate context, to wonder and imagine at the happenstance of these assemblages, and to ponder the past that has brought these objects to the surface of each of our individual human paths.

In my research and work, I have attempted to instigate a renewed curiosity for remainders. By activating these objects with probing, unanswerable questions, and by considering banal, everyday littered detritus as encounters with significant histories, I attempt to activate sensations of connectivity within shared space.

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<sup>36</sup> The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association reports that by 2100, ocean pH levels could reach levels unseen for 20 million years. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, “Ocean Acidification,” Accessed 25 March 2019, <https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/ocean-coasts-education-resources/ocean-acidification>.



## Remnants

*Go ahead and sit or stand anywhere along the concrete barrier. Watch the speeding cars cross over the asphalt surface along the expressway. Directly underneath those rubbery tires was once a cemetery -- the near final resting place of governors, composers, lieutenant, commanders, declaration-signers. Now they lay across the street in an apportioned square that was spared. Look across the street -- do you see the stone barrier lining the edge of the University campus? There is the remnant, in a tiny guarded plot.*

Figure 5: Excerpt from walking tour

The built landscape of Baltimore is centuries old. The space upon which it is situated has gone through countless iterations: from Algonquian and Susquehannock tribes of Native Americans; to colonizers and industrialists; and finally, to highway builders, gentrifiers, and city planners who carve, apportion, and calculate. The landscape we see is a series of choices, the result of simultaneous systems converging from multiple temporalities, and fragments that have endured the passage of time. Within that paradigm, we can begin to locate bits of past systems and forces. These pieces of past among present are what I refer to as remnants.

These remnants are both large and small. A block south of the starting point of the walking tour is the B&O Railroad Museum, a remnant turned institution, a 40-acre campus dedicated to housing the memory of Baltimore's celebrated industrial past.<sup>37</sup> Lithuanian Hall still stands as an adaptable beacon to the immigrant communities that settled here during the industrial age.<sup>38</sup> There are, however, more subtle remnants one may happen upon when strolling through the entire city. In Hollins Market specifically, windows and stairways of historic houses are often lined with metal work that was actually manufactured in Baltimore during its industrial

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<sup>37</sup> B&O Railroad Museum, Accessed March 19, 2019, <http://www.borail.org/History-of-the-Museum.aspx>.

<sup>38</sup> Lithuanian Hall, Accessed March 25 2019 <https://www.lithuanianhall.com/signup-form>.

age.<sup>39</sup> Empty lots are lined with bollards barring entry, documenting the city's efforts to restrict pop-up mechanics.<sup>40</sup>

Ghost signs — outdated, painted advertisements that linger on buildings, even after their purpose have faded — are another example of remnant material. Usually appearing on buildings whose purpose has shifted, their preservation is often overlooked, and is often a product of passivity, rather than calculation. As cultural theorists Antonia Lewis and Kirsten Wright point out, they are a byproduct of industrialization, constructed literally from materials of the industrial age. Ghost signs act as disembodied signifiers. They are simultaneously in-place and out-of-place, of a past temporality but also a contemporary geography. For the contemporary passerby, this temporal dissonance instigates a moment of wonder — a moment of reckoning with the precarious geography of residents and businesses under the shadow of future “development” projects.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Phoebe B. Stanton, *Poppleton Historic Study*, (Baltimore: City of Baltimore Department of Housing and Community Development, 1975), 19.

<sup>40</sup> *Poppleton Historic Study*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Sam Roberts and Geraldine Marshall, “What is a Ghost Sign?” in *Advertising and Public Memory: Social, Cultural, and Historical Perspectives on Ghost Signs* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 16.

## Continuities

*These are tiny ecosystems – tiny ecosystems – that permeate the brick surfaces here, next to the leaking garbage cans, next to the patchy, blasted asphalt torn up by ongoing municipal projects. This breathing universe has found space here, where a Consolidated Delivery station once stood. Here – where smog and industry once leaked from Mount Claire station. Here, where the echoes of the laborers who worked and fought for better conditions during the city's industrial era still dwell, across the street in Lithuanian Hall. I like to imagine these lichens were witnesses to that – that these lichens are a string of thriving continuity from the past to present, here under our fingertips.*

Figure 6: Excerpt from walking tour

Continuities are glistening areas of hope and resilience. They appear in unsuspecting areas. They emerge with a vibrant life force that offers hope and purpose in the midst of blight, destruction, and violence. Lichen, moss, unruly weeds, and cracked concrete are examples of continuities that emerge between and in the midst of human systems and infrastructure. I have also focused on areas that glisten with a continuity of spontaneous human function. These are areas whose purpose is defined not by municipal planners or other city officials, but by visitors, dwellers, and users whose activities are embedded in the material of the landscape via (among many other things) desire paths, graffitied walls, and wheat-pasted signs.

Lichens are sites of perfect mutualism. They consist of two distinct parts: fungus and cyanobacteria, which feed off of each other's energy with vibrant, immortal force. Their interconnection is so extraordinary that ecologists and lichenologists still dispute whether lichen is in fact an organism or an ecosystem:

To most lichenologists, lichens are essentially the outward face of an enduring partnership between two or more unrelated organisms: a fungus on the one hand, and algae or cyanobacteria(or both) on the other... lichens are fungal greenhouses; lichens are algal farmsteads; lichens are ecosystems; lichens are organisms; lichens are emergent property.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ways of Enlichenment, Accessed March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.waysofenlichenment.net/>.

The ability of lichen to grow and exist in such perfect reciprocal function is a beacon of hope, a display of nature's enduring ability to thrive and adapt within and around destructive forces.

Botanist and artist Anne Pringle, who has a similar fascination with these resilient growths, developed a practice of documenting their growth each year by literally tracing strands and patches of lichen as they spread over tombstones in New England. She repeats the drawings each year, in the same location. Her practice, she says, is a way of investigating the question: "How long does each world last?"<sup>43</sup>

If lichen is a testament to ecological continuity, desire paths – walkways that form in grassy areas due to repeated footsteps, rather than intentional design – are a manifestation of the power of grassroots use. In an empty lot along Baltimore and Arlington Streets, a narrow dirt path has been excavated with the repeated treading of human footsteps. Desire paths are found in most parks and gathering spaces and serve as a metaphor for the power of human bodies to alter form, to produce space. Artist and geographer Trevor Paglen articulated this process:

Humans create the world around them, and humans are, in turn, created by the world around them. In other words, the human condition is characterized by a feedback loop between human activity and our material surroundings. In this view, space is not a container for human activities to take place in, but is actively produced through human activities. The spaces humans produce, in turn, set powerful constraints on subsequent activity.<sup>44</sup>

In order to continue the functionality of human systems, gravel must be mined, oil must be drilled, and plastic manufactured, all of which have profound impact on the earth. These systems produce damaged space. I am interested, alternatively, in the power of spontaneous use. I am interested in the cumulative impact of individuals altering defined uses, breaking rules, and

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<sup>43</sup> Anne Pringle, "Establishing New Worlds," *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, G161.

<sup>44</sup> Trevor Paglen, "Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space" in *Experimental Geography: Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography, and Urbanism*, ed. Nato Thompson (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2008), 28.

seizing agency within the flexibility their actions generate. I celebrate desire paths with affinity. While the initial implication of desire paths – faulty design – may at first seem superficial, they are a concrete reminder that repeated divergent action has the capacity to construct new space.

## Conclusion

In my effort to identify, document, and chart instances of remnants, remainders, ghosts, and continuities, I have repeatedly turned to cartography as a means to contextualize and uncover relationships between ostensibly separate entities. A map provides a framework – a literal frame delineating what is and what is not in question. Maps are intriguing, sometimes strange, combinations of converging information that provide a literal or figurative topography for discerning one's bearings. Maps provide context and give direction by distilling information into legible abstractions. Maps are not passive documents. Travel atlases define the lands we inhabit by the highways, buildings, street corners, and train tracks that impose their impervious surfaces upon ecological fluidity. Maps declare borders, construct boundaries, delineate pathways, and profess definitions that those in power have used, throughout history, to define and control indigenous lands.<sup>45</sup> But when I walk, I document, narrate, and map the remnants, remainders, and ghosts that dwell in quotidian areas. I engage with and record a concrete world not regularly found in an atlas – the areas in between its delineations. I follow and chart my senses as I look for and uncover the histories that echo in urban space. In Abram's words:

By acknowledging such links between the inner, psychological world and the perceptual terrain that surrounds us, we begin to turn inside-out, loosening the psyche from its confinement within a strictly human sphere, freeing sentience to return to the sensible world that contains us.<sup>46</sup>

By archiving my optic, haptic, kinetic, and olfactory observations and perceptions via photography, narration, and movement, I have chronicled my process of nurturing an embodied, sensorial relationship to landscape.

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<sup>45</sup> Benedict Anderson demonstrates this history in his work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> David Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 262.

## Appendix I: Palimpsests and Paradigms

The term “palimpsest” was originally used in reference to ancient documents bearing multiple inscriptions upon the same surface. Beginning in the seventh century, monks in European monasteries employed a chemical process to erase manuscripts of their content in order to inscribe new text upon the same surface. The passage of time, however, revealed that their attempts to erase were not entirely successful; oxidation caused a resurgence of a red ghostly image of the original text from beneath the new inscription. For centuries, only monks, historians, and others dealing with ancient documents knew about or interacted with palimpsests. In 1845, Romanticist writer Thomas De Quincey published *The Palimpsest*, in which he used the palimpsest as a metaphor to elucidate the manner in which the human mind processes new information. He wrote: “Our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of concrete objects ... in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled.”<sup>47</sup> DeQuincey goes on to compare the human brain to a palimpsest, drawing a connection between the resurgence of text in manuscripts and the presence of memory in the midst of current experience. Literary theorist Sarah Dillon built upon the metaphor set out by DeQuincey, presenting the palimpsest as a concrete manifestation of the dialectic between dominant and suppressed narratives, asserting that the palimpsest “features colonized and colonizer’s discourses as interlocking .... it embodies the potential for future re-inscriptions of the cultural and historical palimpsest, for shifts in the balances of power and force.”<sup>48</sup>

Based on this theory, to decipher a palimpsest is to consider, understand, and/or imagine not only the suppressed text, but the relationship between the simultaneous narratives. This mode

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<sup>47</sup> Sarah Dillon, “Reinscribing DeQuincey’s Palimpsest: The Significance of the Palimpsest in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Studies,” *Textual Practice* 19, No. 3, (2005): 245.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

of looking for and deciphering multiple voices, forces, and narratives upon a singular (concrete) surface is applicable across disciplines. As art historian Kimberly Powell points out:

The term *palimpsest* has been used in disciplines such as literary theory, architecture, geography, media studies and technology, as evidence of its metaphoric prowess and possibility .... Theoretical concepts such as the palimpsest have allowed for an analysis of history, human experience, and culture that continually interact and are embodied in the present.<sup>49</sup>

The past is not merely a concept; it is, in Powell's words, "embodied" in the present. With the oxidized text of palimpsest manuscripts as a concrete example of this overlap, I have employed the "metaphoric prowess" of the palimpsest in public space as an avenue by which the overlapping forces that structure and define shared landscapes may be investigated.

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<sup>49</sup> Kimberly Powell, "Remapping the City: Palimpsest, Place, and Identity in Art Education Research," *Studies in Art Education* 50, No. 1 (2008), 7.



## Appendix II: Past Work

In my first year of graduate school, I lived in a west Baltimore neighborhood across the street from Druid Hill Park, the oldest park in the U.S. I was instantly drawn to the park not only for its much-appreciated refuge of greenery in the midst of congested traffic, but also for its relative openness. As Lucy Lippard points out in her book *The Lure of the Local* (1997), parks “provide one place where activities and classes have traditionally overlapped. Parks are places where you can’t control the noise kids make, where you can heckle the soapbox politicians, and be warmed or shocked by blissful, oblivious lovers.”<sup>50</sup> In contrast to sidewalks, roads, monuments, and plazas, parks are unique in that their purpose is often flexible – especially in large, minimally designed areas such as Druid Hill.

Drawn to this relative flexibility, I decided to survey the park through a series of walks, during which I would wander through areas that were new to me, and photograph surfaces I interpreted as “palimpsest.” By meticulously documenting and mapping these instances, such as faded warning signs, cracked concrete, worn street markings, and boarded windows, I attempted to draw attention to specific instances of palimpsests, especially those that would disappear with a redevelopment project of the lake that started in 2017.

The most literal palimpsests were the signs hung around the periphery of the lake. Signs that had once served as warnings for civilians to stay out of the lake had faded, and the words of warning themselves were overlain with stickers, messages, lost dog posters, and scrawled drawings. Other features, such as plants popping up through cracks in the pavement, required a metaphoric application of the term, but all spoke to the simultaneity of past and present in the urban landscape.

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<sup>50</sup> Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 235.

By framing an image of a faded street sign as a “palimpsest,” I aimed to draw attention to the power of human use to challenge the functions prescribed by urban design and convention. In the midst of blinking blue police cameras and warning signs, serendipitous crossings of narratives manifest in surprising ways. As Matthew Coolidge of the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI) suggests, the “answers to what remains unclear to us are exposed for all to see... they can be found in the overlooked quotidian elements that surround us.”<sup>51</sup> These “quotidian” palimpsests were, to me, proof that within the surveilled space that we are all accustomed to, the dominant, conventional, and prescribed uses of the space – e.g., running, walking, cycling, playing tennis, picnicking, et cetera – are not the only forces at work in our shared spaces. As weeds emerge in cracked concrete, bands put up their posters, and hands inscribe notes. Signifiers emerge in public spaces just as oxidized texts did in palimpsest manuscripts.

Later, I documented myself adhering vinyl phrases to the “palimpsests” I had surveyed, compiled those sites into a web-based map, and established the inaugural exhibition of a self-founded institution called “The Museum of Contemporary Palimpsest” (2017). Each phrase, such as “This landscape is centuries old” or “Inciting kaleidoscopic effigies” attempted to activate attentiveness to the detail of the surface it was adhered to, thus creating a site-specific micro poem.

My relatively absurd effort to document and activate palimpsest surface is a small-scale implementation of similar surveying strategies used by artists to question the function of the spaces and places in which we live (and provided a conceptual and material foundation on which I developed my thesis project). For instance, the CLUI’s ongoing practice of “increasing and

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<sup>51</sup> Matthew Coolidge and Sarah Simons, ed., *Overlook: exploring the internal fringes of America with The Center for Land Use Interpretation* (New York: Metropolis Books, 2006), 16.

diffusing knowledge about how the nation's lands are apportioned, utilized, and perceived"<sup>52</sup> activates the question "What is that thing, anyway, and how did it get there?"<sup>53</sup> The CLUI responds by creating exhibitions that feature common sites like parking lots, dry lakes, abandoned malls, mines, and power plants, and framing them as underexplored landscapes. This strategy points to what is hidden in plain sight: that the landscapes human systems have appraised, apportioned, and extracted are imbricated within an unimaginably interconnected surrounding ecology.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 7.

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