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# Grayways: Philadelphia to New York

2017-

This study tests a framework for design ideation based on moving bodily through a major urban region. It grows out of an ongoing series of one-day, 100-mile bike rides from Philadelphia to Hoboken, NJ, along with subsequent mapping and research.

The Philadelphia-New York corridor of the Northeastern Megalopolis is densely populated, well-traveled, culturally rich, and extensively researched; yet there is no well-established walking or biking route connecting the two city centers. The closest equivalent is a section of the East Coast Greenway, which remains fragmented in key areas because it is superimposed on a landscape designed to prioritize motor vehicles.

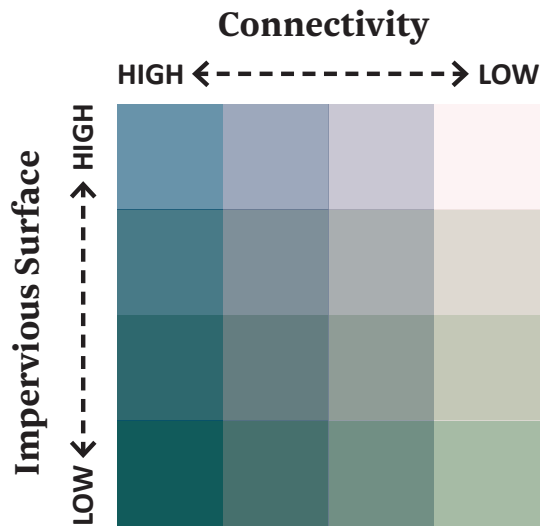
The interruptions in continuity and quality of walking and biking routes is particularly severe in the industrial/infrastructural rings surrounding the pedestrian-friendly urban centers of Philadelphia and New York. These outer rings have been the subject of ambitious, high-level plans to create new urban form and ecological systems. But an on-the-ground test of the large-scale walkability and bikeability of the Philadelphia-New York Corridor suggests smaller, more targeted interventions that can be regionally transformative with comparatively small investment.



30-second time lapse photos  
Philadelphia to Hoboken Ride #2, 2018

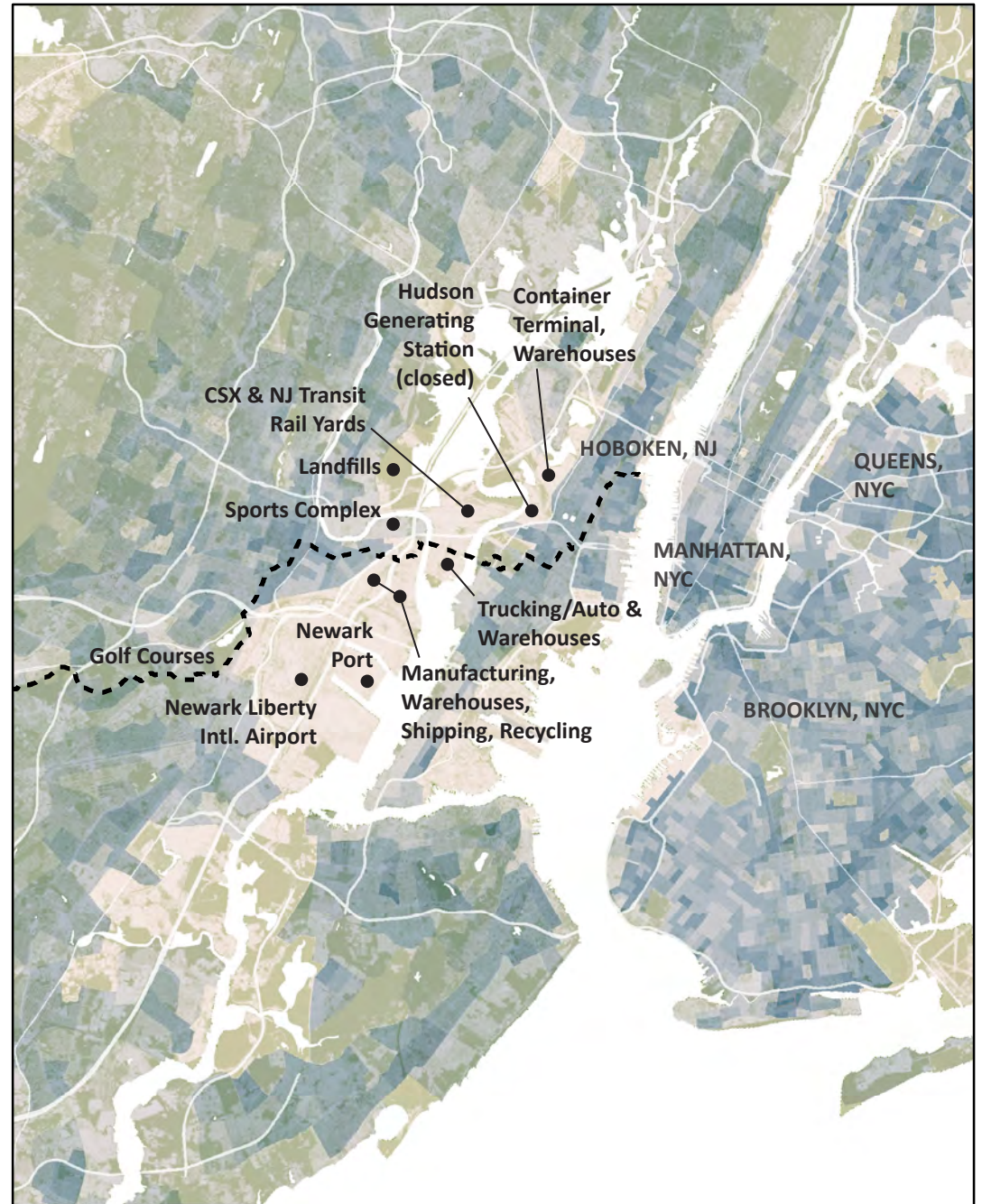


East Coast Greenway at US-Rt 9, Jersey City, New Jersey  
Philadelphia to Hoboken Ride #1



**Connectivity:** Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Connectivity Score based on density of non-freeway street intersections, 2015

**Impervious Surface:** National Land Cover Database Impervious Surface, 2011, amended 2014



# Atlantic Coast: Brooklyn to Miami

2016-2017

Following a 2011 project based on riding the full Trans-Siberian Railway and a subsequent solo walking trip across my home state of Pennsylvania, I have become increasingly interested in how forms of travel affect the perception of landscape. In particular, I want to suggest opportunities for narrative and bodily experience in the context of an increasing focus on geographical scales in landscape architecture and contemporary life. In September 2016 I cycled from Brooklyn to Miami with my father and later translated our notes, GPS records and weather data into a book of narrative maps.



*Atlantic Coast: Brooklyn to Miami, 2017, Book*  
GPS and journal records from my ride were combined with base GIS layers and NOAA satellite weather data to map, in time and space, the experience of each day



## Day 4-5: Princess Anne to Tangier to White Stone

Tuesday, September 6; Wednesday, September 7

- ① Up at 7:00 for breakfast at Booklovers; depart a little after 8:00
  - ② Arrive in Crisfield with time to spare for ferry; pick up tickets, make a supply run in the little downtown and eat lunch from Captain's Carry-Out at a picnic table on the waterfront: maybe the best crab cake sandwich I've ever had
  - ③ Arrive at Tangier ferry terminal; passed the Courtney Thomas (mail and supply boat) en route; greeted by a large, grizzled former full-time pleasure sailer from Waterloo NY, who advises on points south
  - ④ Check in at Hilda Crockett's Chesapeake House
- After showering and setting in, we walk across the 10-foot wide lane to the large dining room in a separate building. The family-style dinner, which is included for all guests, is excellent and plentiful. Afterwards we walk all around the island and out to the beach jetty at the southern tip. The town is basically 3 short strips of little buildings on more-or-less dry land with salt marsh in between, plus the elaborate dock and shed constructions in the harbor for the crab men. Because of recent storms much of the island is under at least 6 inches of water, but no one is particularly bothered. Crabs swim underfoot and a goose paddles across someones front yard. Lots of tucked away crevices reveal cats. We read on the porch for a bit and go to bed early.
- We get up at 6:30 for another very good meal in the dining room a few minutes after 7:00. We meet another tourist, a kind of creepy veteran who talks about Vietnam and sleeping with women on the Marshall Islands while his wife joins some local women across the room for morning hymns. Elizabeth from Princess Anne had told us to check out the stain glass in the Methodist church but we end up walking in on an open-casket funeral. We eat lunch at the Fisherman's corner and check out the little town museum before catching the 2:00 ferry to Reedville.
- ⑤ Arrive at ferry terminal deep in the inlet serving Reedville; posh houses on the far banks and many pelicans
  - ⑥ Nameless Jesse Dupont Hwy high-rise bridge over Great Wicomico River (formerly Tiper's Bridge)
  - ⑦ Arrive at Rivers Landing Bed and Breakfast in White Stone and get set up in the pool house as arranged; walk to town for dinner at Sandpiper Restaurant



# The Longest Shortcut: Penny White Traveling Fellowship in Siberia

Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, 2011

In 2011 I was awarded the Penny White Traveling Fellowship through the Landscape Department at Harvard's Graduate School of Design to ride the full length of the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow to Vladivostok. My proposal was to explore the possibilities and challenges involved in perceiving and representing extremely large territories, and was inspired by two precedents related to the railway. The first was an 850 meter-long drawing depicting scenes from the Trans-Siberian line around 1899. Recently restored by the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, the *Great Siberian Route* was presented at the 1900 Paris Exposition as one of two mechanized panoramas depicting the newly completed Trans-Siberian line. The second precedent was the recent partnership of Google Maps with Russian Railways to stream video shot through a train window of the entire journey from Moscow to Vladivostok, syncing this with a navigable map interface.

During my own trip, I made extensive notes and sketches, took a photographs, recorded sound, and conversed (imperfectly) with my fellow travelers. After returning I continued my research on the history and theory of mechanized perception and began planning an installation of my own that would embody my experience and ideas concerning the meaningful representation of large spaces.



GoogleMaps and Russian Railways, 2011

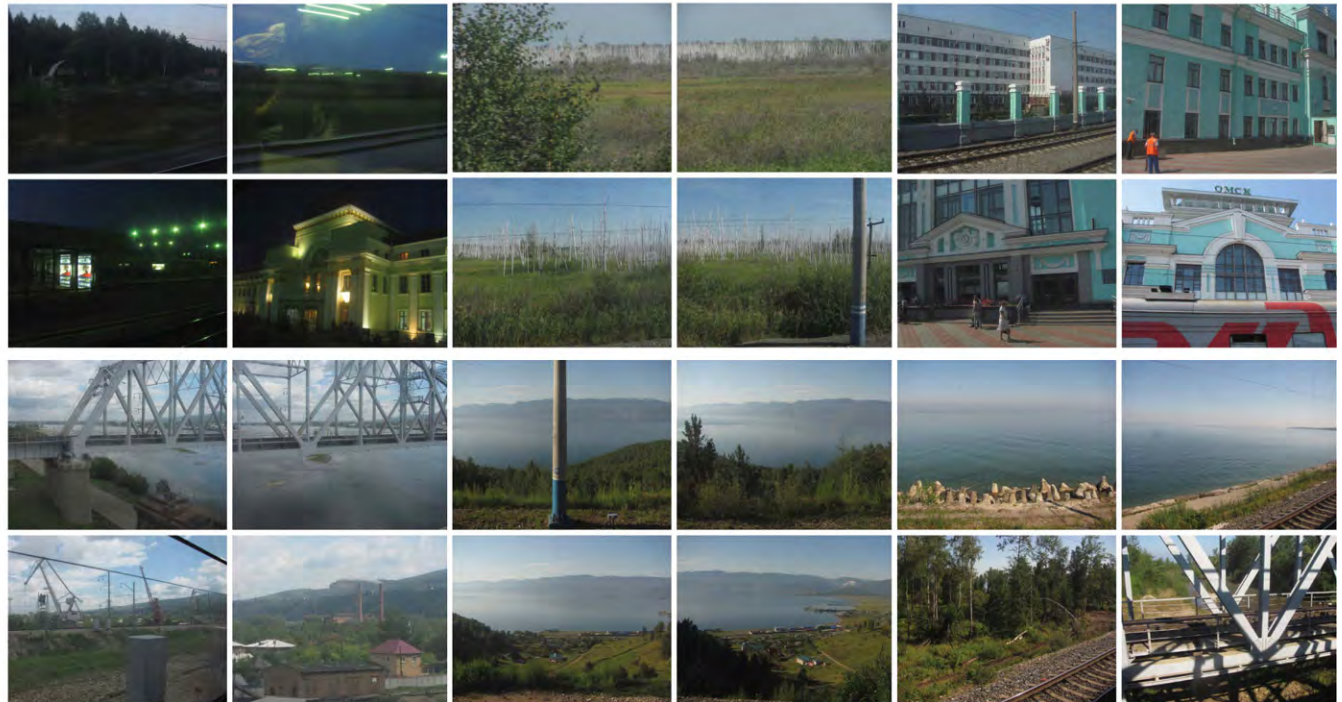
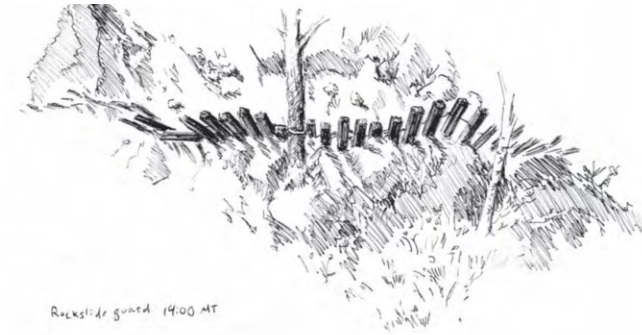


contemporary rail lines crossing Siberia; Trans-Siberian Line and the route of Moscow-Vladivostok: virtual journey on Google Maps shown in pink

Pavel Yakovlevich Pyasetsky, 1894-1899



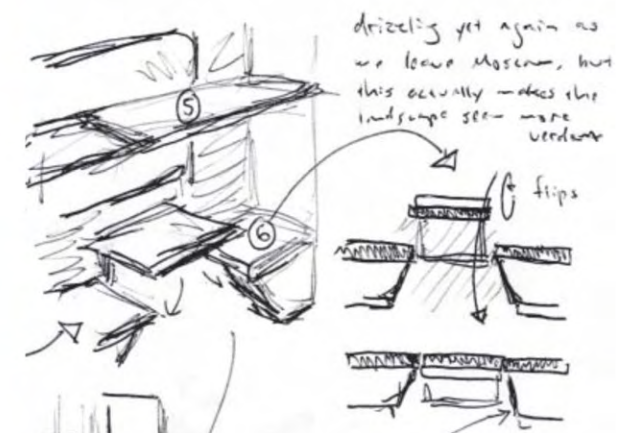
interpolation of Pavel Pyasetsky's main route (pink) to document newly constructed and future sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway



*I looked for ways to understand the extent of my journey other than conventional mapping, especially those that relate directly to the body and the imagination. I kept a sketchbook and compiled a travelogue of more than 1000 sequential photographs.*



Inspired by Wolfgang Shivelbusch's concept of the "machine ensemble," which describes a form of perception resulting from the collaboration of the human body with a moving vehicle, I built an installation based on a common type of Russian Railways convertible sleeper-seat. The structure, which also functioned as a library of sketches, notes, sound recordings, and academic writing on train travel and perception of landscape, was displayed at the Center for Government and International Studies at Harvard as part of the 2012 exhibition, Travel, Traversal.





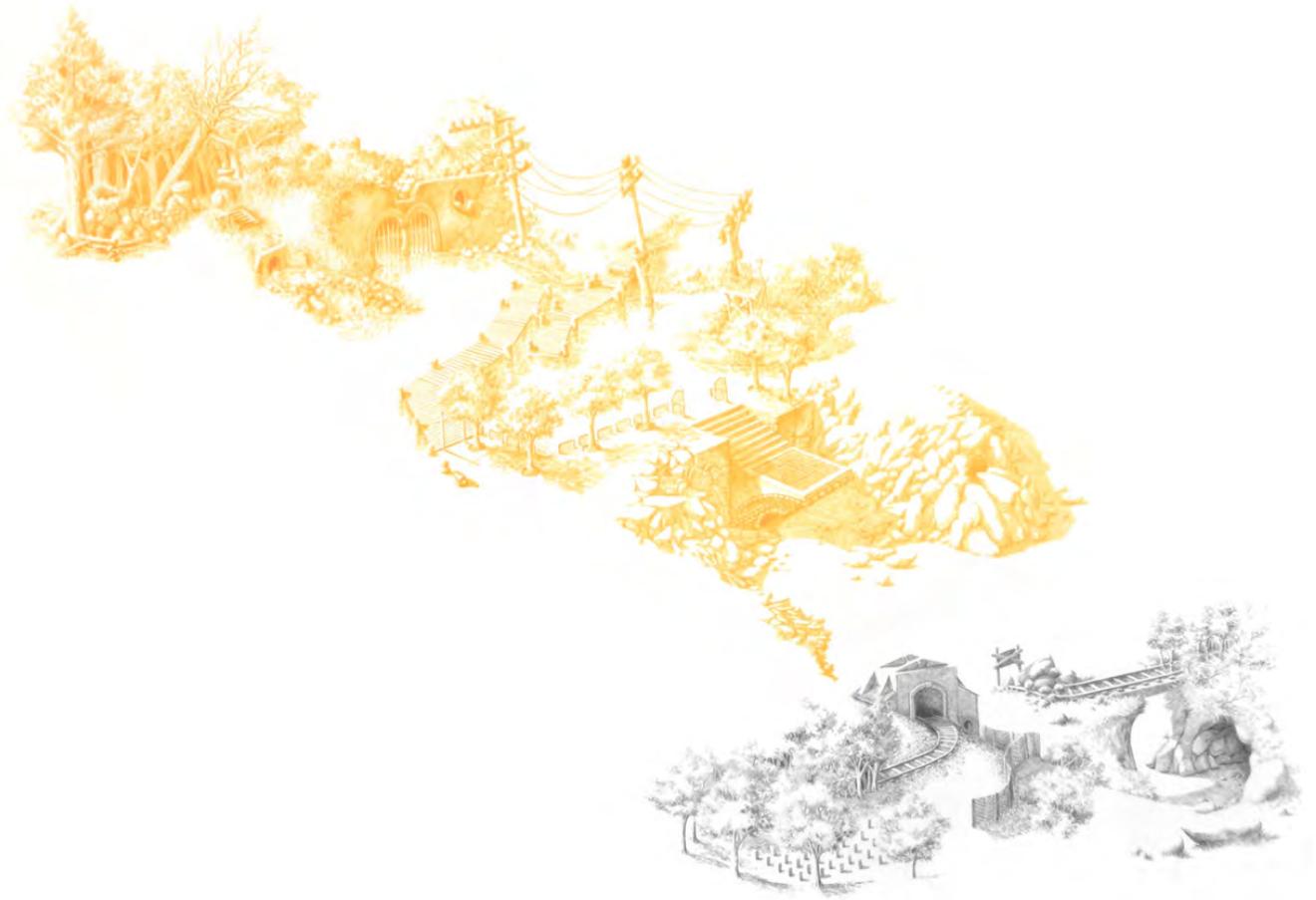
# Drawings

2008–2017

Beginning with my MFA thesis work at Purchase College, SUNY in 2007 and 2008, I have pursued an interest in drawing as a projection of narrative into imaginary space. Sesshū Tōyō's long landscape drawings are a touchstone; these and similar works suggested to me that it is possible to intuitively overlay time, space, and different scales of experience into a single representation.

Working mostly in ink with a single fine brush, the drawings encourage a slow scanning of their pictorial space, as if moving bodily through the imagined landscape. Larger scale drawings actually require moving the body from end to end, making walking both an analogous and literal means of engaging with the image.

The character of the landscape in these drawings, and in an earlier series of paintings, comes from my fascination with marginal landscapes—those between the clearly designed and feral. These intermediate states are positioned in time and/or space: complex edges between different kinds of places or landscapes in the process of realization or decay.



*Hardcore History*, 2013  
Colored ink on paper, 23" x 30"



*Greens #3*, 2017  
Colored ink on paper, 29" x 41"

## walking and narrative

walking  
narrative  
embodiment  
time  
drawing



Alec Spangler. *Greens #2*, 2015. Coloured ink on paper, 30" x 41"

*Walking and Narrative*, 2015  
Essay and illustration published in  
*On Site review 33*

THE MID-1980s to early 90s was a big time for extra dimensions. Superstring theorists proposed an 11-dimensional universe; digital virtual realities had become possible, and popular culture abounded with stories of strange, secret worlds overlaid onto our own. It was also the period in my childhood when I became interested in walking. The kind of walks I liked were mundane and arduous; drawn-out errands in back-country suburbia. I don't doubt this habit began as a way of playing out my Terry Gilliam-fueled inter-dimensional fantasies. I enjoyed going to the often seen but rarely inhabited places I knew from car windows; medians and edges of industrial parks, places where Stephen King might have said that the boundaries between worlds had grown thin. Had I known the word 'uncanny' I'd have been able to describe where I wanted those walks to take me. I only knew them as my version of a magic wardrobe.

Years later I found out about more analytic methods for such spell-casting. Erwin Straus thought that when walkers become train travellers the phenomenon of space contracts and is systematised. So for those of us used to mechanised forms of living, walking ought to de-systematise. I think this means 'make-into-narrative'. When I read about Straus's idea of mechanised 'geographic space' versus bodily 'landscape space' I fully understood what walking means to me.<sup>1</sup> Walking is narrative; and narrative is all about embedded worlds.

I've spent some time thinking about what the expression of walking is in art and design, even in strategies for living. For me, the answer is that the walking-self creates by telling stories: there is duration and spatial extent. The body has a place in it. Possible outcomes are multiple and simultaneous; there are added dimensions. There is meaning. There is no logical necessity. There is no rightness, because stories don't have to be right. They just have to be good. ■

<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch. *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986. pp52-53

# Max Family Garden, Brooklyn Bridge Park

Brooklyn, NY, 2012–2016

Project Manager, Designer

Previously known as the Tobacco Warehouse, the site of the Max Family Garden is a nineteenth-century warehouse building in Brooklyn's DUMBO neighborhood that has been preserved as a stabilized ruin. A local progressive theater company, St. Ann's Warehouse, acquired the bulk of the site for the construction of a new performance space and agreed to develop the adjoining 8,000-square-foot walled space as a public garden to be owned and operated by Brooklyn Bridge Park.

With Michael Van Valkenburgh, I developed initial design concepts for the garden and made revisions based on client and community feedback and coordination with Marvel Architects, designers of the new St. Ann's theater. I oversaw design development, documentation, and construction administration; because of the proximity of the site to the office, I was able to interact directly with contractors almost daily during construction.

The built design is a respite from the dense and growing neighborhood on one side and the expansive and highly active riverfront landscape of Brooklyn Bridge Park on the other. In response to the triangular shape and relatively small size of the space, the pavement is conceived as a meandering field, enabling effective circulation without overly partitioning the site. A planting palette of 24 species blends with the pavement edge and frames views through the openings in the historic structure and to the Brooklyn Bridge overhead. Salvaged curbs and other stone fragments found in adjacent buildings are incorporated as paving and seating elements, providing nodes of small gathering as well as sculptural reminders of the layered history of the site.





*Study models and views were crucial for testing initial concepts against the architectural specificity of the site.*

*Large scale models incorporated inventoried stone pieces to accurately represent available stock of salvage material*



*Communicating the nuances of the design, including the use of found materials, required a combination of precise documentation and direct collaboration with contractors.*



*Planting is designed for richness in all seasons and at all scales. Tree and shrub species must be tolerant of occasional inundation, given the site's low elevation and proximity to the East River. Photo left: Izabela Riano-Levy; photo upper middle: Lexi Van Valkenburgh*

## Connecticut Residence

Warren, CT, 2012–Present

Project Manager, Designer

For four years at MVVA, I worked with residential clients on their property in northwest corner of Connecticut. The first phase of work was a site design for the area around a new house: 3.5 of a total 75 acres roughly encompassing one small foothill of the southern Berkshires. Most of the former pasture land and second or third growth forest was to be maintained as a natural area. Remnants of the former occupants, including extensive dry laid farm walls, mature trees, and an abandoned orchard, were to be preserved and emphasized. The new entry and house landscape, including a pool and outbuilding, was modeled after an old field meadow with a gradation of woodland plants at its margins.

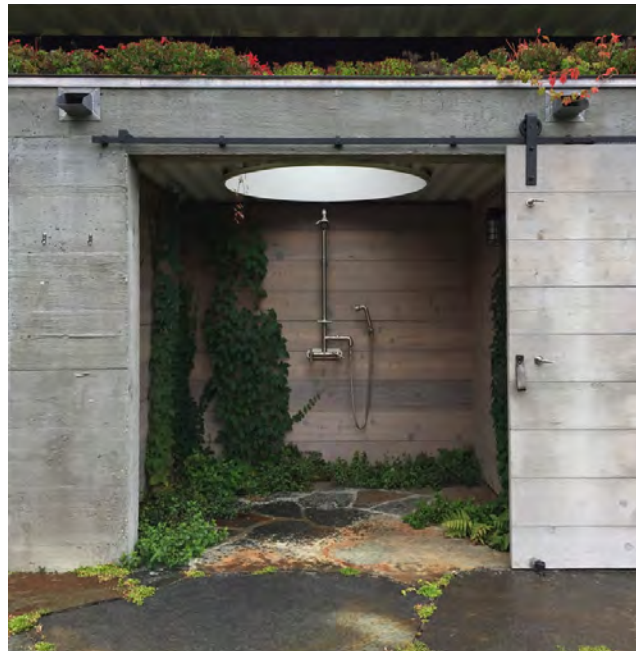
After the initial phase, for which I completed concept design, documentation, and construction administration under the direction of MVVA Principal Matt Urbanski and Associate Eric Brightman, I continued to work directly with the client on further improvements to the property. Currently, I am working with the owners and local landscape architect Dirk Sabin on the creation of a new pond and leading the development of a stumpery concept—an updated version of an unusual Victorian garden feature incorporating the many salvaged rocks and stumps from site development.





*Sandstone recovered from the excavation of the house foundation skirts an elliptical black locust deck, echoing several natural rock outcrops.*

*Iterative studies based on a rough inventory of available stones informed the final in-field placement.*



*Limited to a modular system, the planting design for the pool house green roof uses a gradient of tray depths and species to achieve a contoured surface with minimal weight.*

*The pool house, designed by architects Albert, Righter, and Tittmann, features an outdoor shower with an open oculus. Mica schist flagstones extend from the pool terrace to the shower interior, where large joints are planted with species adaptable to this very particular microclimate.*



