LIC GROUNDED

A TREE FOR ANABLE BASIN

A Tree for Anable Basin springs from the desire to investigate and celebrate an enigmatic landscape through art. This site-specific proposal highlights the developmental tensions that have shaped and continue to shape the Basin's character.

As a natural object crafted from recognizably industrial materials, the floating sculpture created by artist Chico MacMurtrie evokes the Basin's historical interplay between industrial and ecological activity. It enhances the existing habitat for migratory water birds, which reclaimed this former loading area for oil tankers approximately a century after its excavation from coastal wetland. The tree subtly raises questions about community access and land use by inviting public spectacle at a traditionally restricted site.

The ongoing tension between permanence and transition in the local environment informs the design of a sculpture that reacts to winds and tides, moves aside for passing vessels, serves migrant animal and human populations, and changes over time. The installation favors views from Long Island City, inverting a long tradition of local commercial installations, such as the Pepsi-Cola and Silvercup signs, that beg attention from Manhattan viewers.

As an older generation of industrial structures gives way to high-rise condos, manicured parks, and potentially an Olympic Village, the scrap-metal tree sparks new conversations about the neighborhood's fluctuating built and ecological environments.

tree . habitat . mechanization . adaptation

SITE DATA

Dimensions – 1100 ft. x 180 ft. *Date built* – 1868 Owner – Dept. of Cityside Admin Services

Surrounding property
Includes CDC Systems (armored truck depot), a taxi depot, Anaconda Corporation (anodized/chromated metal), a warehouse for rent with parking lot fronting the basin, and a contaminated construction area under intensive cleanup that will ultimately host new Queens West condominium towers. Several basin-front properties are reportedly owned by Plaxall, Inc., a plastics manufacturer that arrived in the 1950s, several decades after the departure of Standard Oil.

Approach
At the time of this proposal, the best way to approach to the site is via the parking lot at the end of 5th Street. Approach is also possible through the taxi depot and CDC parking lot on the northeast side of the basin, although a thin metal fence prevents entering directly. Finally, visitors or workers may enter in perhaps the most logical way—by boat. When the lot fronting the East River is fully developed and reopened as part of the Queens West complex (as early as 2008), the riverfront will most likely offer the easiest access.

access / restriction . juxtaposition . tidal theater

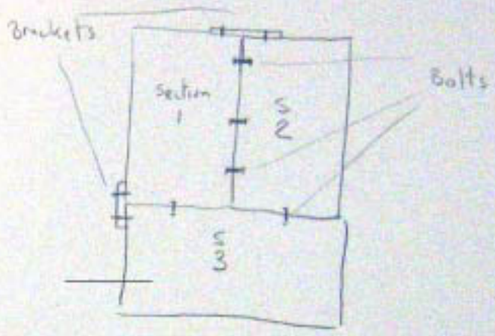
petrification . urban island . formal transformation

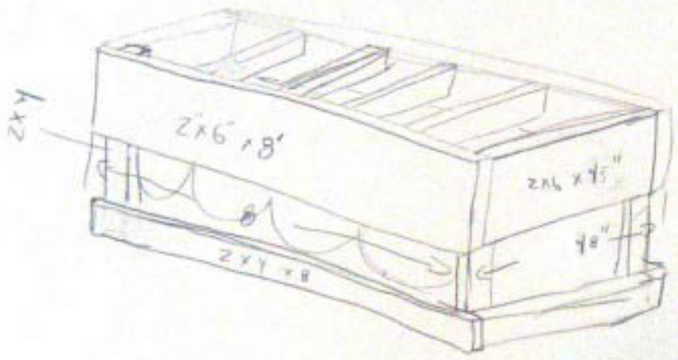
Hemlock

1 of 15 sections

4 Barrels
galvanized lags
stainless screws

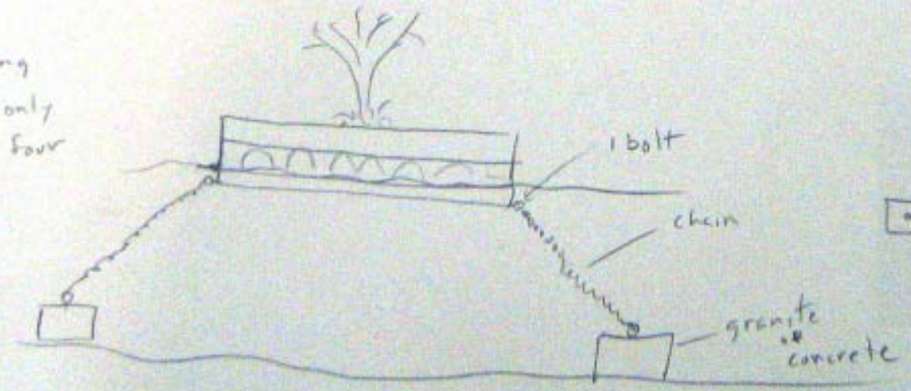
Attach sections together
with galvanized bolts & steel brackets

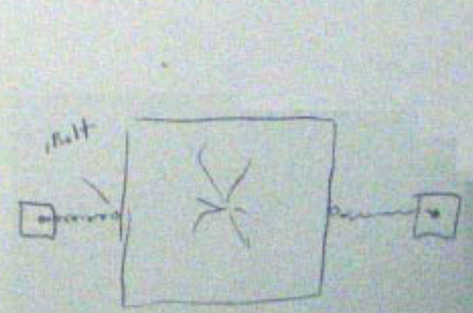




once sections are assembled in water
Then it will be decked over with 1x6 decking

it needs only
two not four





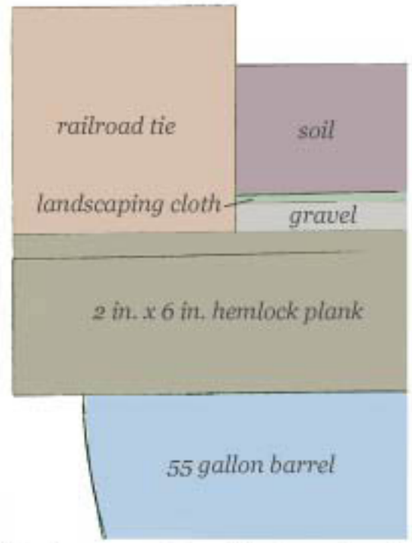


fig. 1 - cross-section of dock construction and layering of landscaping materials

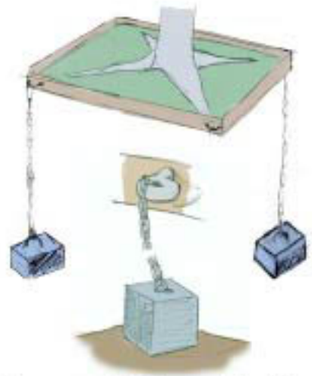


fig. 2 - positioning and detailing of moorings

DOCK CONSTRUCTION

The dock will be constructed of primarily hemlock planks, 55 gallon plastic barrels, and a number of galvanized bolts and lags. Fifteen separate portable sections will be constructed then assembled on site into the final 24 foot by 20 foot floating base.

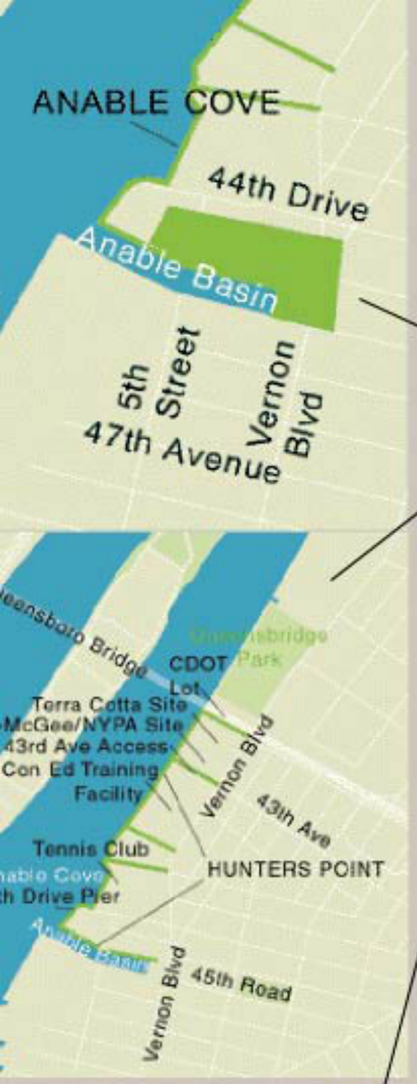
Constructing the top decking of the structure after its assembly in the water will reduce the weight of each section for easier handling out of water and increase its overall strength. The decking will tie together all the sections making a seamless surface for the landscaping materials. It will also alow easier access for the bolting of each section to each other. For simplicity, these draawings illustrate only three sections bolted together.

The dock will be anchored to the river bed by two large granite or concrete moorings. The moorings will be chained to two bolts on the side of the deck and can easily be unlatched to allow repositioning of the structure. When not attached to the deck, the chains will be held up by buoys.

The second stage of construction will anchor Chico MacMurtrie's scrap metal tree into the deck surface. Like its base, the sculpture will also be assembled from transportable parts on site. A layer of gravel topped with a thin porous layer of landscaping cloth, and soil will provide an adequate base for the grasses, reeds, and vines that will grow around and up the tree. After completion of the second stage, the dock will be launched into the water and anchored into place at the mouth of the cove.

The final design and construction of the tree itself will be completed largely by Brooklyn-based artist Chico MacMurtrie of Amorphic Robot Works. His work, which includes a series of synthetic trees and permanent outdoor sculpture, has been exhibited around the world. His experience in interactive and kinetic sculpture helped inspire the moving component of the Anable tree. Long interested in public art and in Long Island City's built legacy, he joined the team as lead sculptor and agreed to build the piece within the budget.

http://amorphicrobotworks.org



COMMUNITY

Although Anable Basin is currently difficult to reach, a variety of Hunter's Point community groups and members have shown accelerating interest in seeing this site become an accessible attraction for the neighborhood. *A Tree for Anable Basin* converges with these efforts to use the basin as a cultural and ecological resource.

A number of community initiatives are underway to increase access and visibility at the site. For example, the Hunter's Point Community Coalition has proposed a specific design for the area between Anable Basin and Anable cove. According to the New York League of Conservation Voters, "The HPCC's plan is aimed at restoring the natural landscape and marsh plants of Anable Cove and includes the creation of a wildlife viewing walkway." Meanwhile, the Department of City Planning has an ambitious design for a Greenway along the Hunter's Point waterfront that runs from the Queensboro bridge to Anable basin.

Another community group is working hard at creating the L.I.C. Community Boat House. The group proposes creating a "boat-hill" off the southern end of the basin, where the northern end of Gantry State Park will extend in the future once stage two of Queens West is finished. This group would like to "get Western Queens residents onto the water."

While neither of the plans have been approved or fully developed, we believe that their existence reflects the community's desire to participate in defining the identity of the basin.

In addition to these smaller community based plans, stage two of Queens West will increase interest and access to Anable Basin by creating green space along its waters and building residential units that overlook the basin.

The installation of *A Tree for Anable Basin* will attract even more attention to the site and stimulate open-ended dialogue. The sculpture's rusting and industrial-looking surface, comprising non-toxic oil barrel pieces and other surplus metals, will reference the basin's former use as an oil slick while the tree itself will illuminate the basin's future role as a restored landscape and haven for migratory birds. A limited number of wind-responsive tree branches swaying in the East River breeze will remind viewers of the ever-changing landscape of which they are part. For some dwellers, workers, or visitors, such active juxtapositions will potently distil the Long Island City experience.

BUDGET

1. Lumber

Size	Quantity	Price	total
5/4 x 6 x 8	150	$6.93	$1, 039.00
2 x 6 x 8	75	$4.35	$326.25
2 x 4 x 8	75	$4.76	$357.00
4 x 4 x 8	4	$9.08	$36.32
	total		$1758.57

2. Lumber shipping ~ $150.00
3. Chain ~ $200.00
4. Buoys ~ $40.00
5. Plastic floatation barrels ~ $350.00
6. Brackets/bolts ~ $300.00
7. Concrete anchors ~ $100 or free through scrap
8. Soil (18 cu. yds) ~ $270
9. Transportation of materials to site by truck ~ $200.00
10. Labor ~ Volunteer construction team led by design team member Joe Nelson.
11. Tree materials plus labor ~ $4000

Total maximum construction cost ~ $7,368

Note: The team is confident in its ability to refine and reduce the construction budget through further materials research.

PROCESS

The team immensely enjoyed exploring and experiencing Long Island City during the research and design processes for the project. An early fascination with the Pennsylvania Railroad Power House gave way to a vision of LIC travel posters mounted at scattered sites. After pursuing community image banks generated by public Polaroid cameras and interactive audio/video installations, we began discussing sculptural birdfeeders at Anable Basin and found ourselves seduced more broadly by the basin's rich dynamic of industrial and ecological development.

The neighborhood's infinite opportunities for compulsive photography and investigation led to one accidental confrontation with police and several spontaneous oral interviews. As we became better acquainted with the site and drove deeper into design and construction details, it became increasingly evident that Anable Basin and its environs are on the cusp of massive spatial and functional reorganization.

The time is ripe to provoke discussion through design at this site. We therefore look forward to the installation of *Tree* as the next stage of an ongoing, unpredictable dialogue between landscape and inhabitants.

TEAM

Our team benefits from the talents of an experienced sculptor, an advanced student of urban bird ecology, and an amateur expert of marine construction.

alphabetical list of members

Vanessa Carr
Eve Hadley
Michael Lum
Chico MacMurtrie
Joe Nelson
Gideon Fink Shapiro

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NEW YORK WILD BIRDS

In the last two years, wild migratory species recorded in New York City area include:

Canada Goose
Warbling Vireo
Carolina Wren
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Cedar Waxwing
Tufted Titmouse
Wood Thrush.