



is not an easy task. How does one find meaning in the 520 miles of coastline that surround the city, and its ever-changing neighborhoods, histories, cultures, and issues? Then, how does one convince mayoral candidates to pay attention to a 10-year plan that maps out conceptual structures, priorities, and policies for this complex space...and commit to act on it.

That was the charge for *Tending the Edge* artists. They were asked to respond to the New

York City Department of City Planning's (DCP) *Plan (CWP)*, the city's roadmap for managing, developing, and caring for its waterfront, with a work that addressed candidates and the public. The DCP's research and development process for the CWP began in 2019, with weekly public meetings and tabling at weekend community events. Their research continued in 2020 on Zoom meetings and through *Walking the Edge*, a collaborative project with Works on Water and Culture Push that encouraged New Yorkers to explore their waterfronts safely during the pandemic lockdown.

Tending the Edge artists approached the breadth of the task through the lenses of their practices and their localities—each focused on a small area of the waterfront that they know well. Their projects form a portrait of the city's waterfront today, and the intersectional urgencies resulting from histories of systemic oppression, industrialization, privatization, and the emergency of a rapidly changing climate.

All 22 Mayoral candidates (one of the largest fields in recent history), as well as some City Council candidates, were invited to participate in *Tending the Edge* artist projects. Those who accepted experienced a wild variety of approaches to understanding and stewarding the New York City waterfront. For Example, Nancy Nowack—in consideration of the breadth and depth of the waterfront's roles in the civic life of the city—offered a ceremonial key made from all the waters to NYC in return for their commitment to the waterfront.

Focusing on specific waterways and ecological features, Ray Jordan Achan began a journey in the complex environment of Flushing Bay and Creek; and Sunk Shore brought visitors to Flushing Creek on a journey to two alternative futures. Simone Johnson brought awareness to the city's surviving wetlands. Focusing on the increasing impacts of climate change, Sarah Cameron Sunde brought attention, with local community partners, to sunny day flooding in the Rockaways.

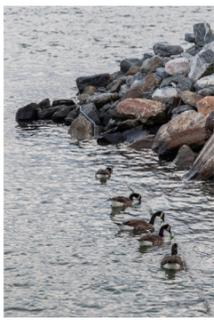
Giving voice to the more than human world, Dylan Gauthier developed an augmented reality work that allows New Yorkers to see the land of the city in new contexts; and Andrea Haenggi gave voices to non-human creatures and plants along the waterfront. Focusing on their local communities, Rejin Leys invited Queens residents to connect today's waterways to the past through scale painting based on the concerns of denizens of Rockaway Beach and immersed it in the waters that inspired her.

— *Clarinda Mac Low and Nancy Nowack*



Other projects illuminated various intersectional issues of our waterways: Dennis RedMoon Darkem created a flag that honored Black and Indigenous water stewardship. Elizabeth Velazquez and her community partners investigated the relationship

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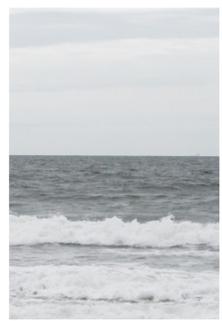


Photos by Walter Wlodarczyk; Top Row: Performer-participants clean up the Jamaica Bay waterfront in, *Sacred Waters: Jamaica Bay*; Second row: geese feed in Red Hook; *Brownfield Boating* in Flushing Creek;

Third row: *Between the Sea and the Shore: Storytelling in Far Rockaway*; Bottom: Candidate Quanda Francis accepts a *Key From the City*; rendering of *Causeway* (courtesy Dylan Gauthier).

Moira Williams (center) and participants in *Crip'd Fleets and Overflows Barge Cabaret*; Bottom: Elizabeth Velazquez begins *Sacred Waters: Jamaica Bay* at the shoreline.

Far left, top to bottom: Andrea Haenggi and collaborators in one enactment of *Symbiotic Estuarial Annotation (SEA)*; A participant photographs Flushing Creek during Cody Ann Herrmann's *Brownfield Boating*; Ceremonial *Key From the City* given to Moira Williams and participants in *Crip'd Fleets and Overflows Barge Cabaret*; Rejin Leys helps a participant choose poem fragments for *Pulp Mobile*; Aerial view of the Ridgewood Reservoir (courtesy Simone Johnson); Dennis RedMoon Darkem's flags for *Honor Indigenous Land, Water & Treaties: A Land Acknowledgment Campaign* ready to send to mayoral candidates (photo: Dennis RedMoon Darkem); Elizabeth Velazquez mid-ritual for *Sacred Waters: Jamaica Bay* (photo: Clarinda Mac Low). All other photos by Walter Wlodarczyk.



Photos by Walter Wlodarczyk; Top Row: *Water in the Streets*; Second row: Audre Wirtanen & L. Tuthall perform in *Crip'd Fleets and Overflows Barge Cabaret*; Third row: strands of poems await becoming paper;



1. Water in the Streets
Sarah Cameron Sunde with Nathan Kensinger, Rockaway Youth Task Force, Beach64Retreat

Many people in Far Rockaway express a similar sentiment: feeling like the rest of New York City only cares about them when

it's summertime because of the beach. Jamaica Bay floods into the streets regularly (a clear sign that the climate crisis is here) but new buildings keep going. I'd like to see: a) all New Yorkers caring for Rockaway year-round, b) City Government prioritizing people who already live in high-risk flood zones, c) more long-term thinking, d) a community-led managed retreat process, and e) everyone in Rockaway having easy access to get out on Jamaica Bay.



2. Symbiotic Estuarial Annotation (SEA): Harbor(ing) Multispecies Wisdom Along the Water's Edge
Andrea Haenggi

Statement from Bladderwrack, seaweed, shore protector, and Speaker of the Estuarial Council of the Weeds at Marsha P. Johnson State Park in

Brooklyn: "We ask the government to build care through reciprocity, the give and take with the land and water, the shore. To build this relationship, we demand that the Mayor and Governor commit to tending the shoreline, from low-tide to high-tide, that they cultivate the action of paying attention to the aquatic and terrestrial plant body languages and recognize our agency. We invite them to join us in building new futures of care and well-being for all."

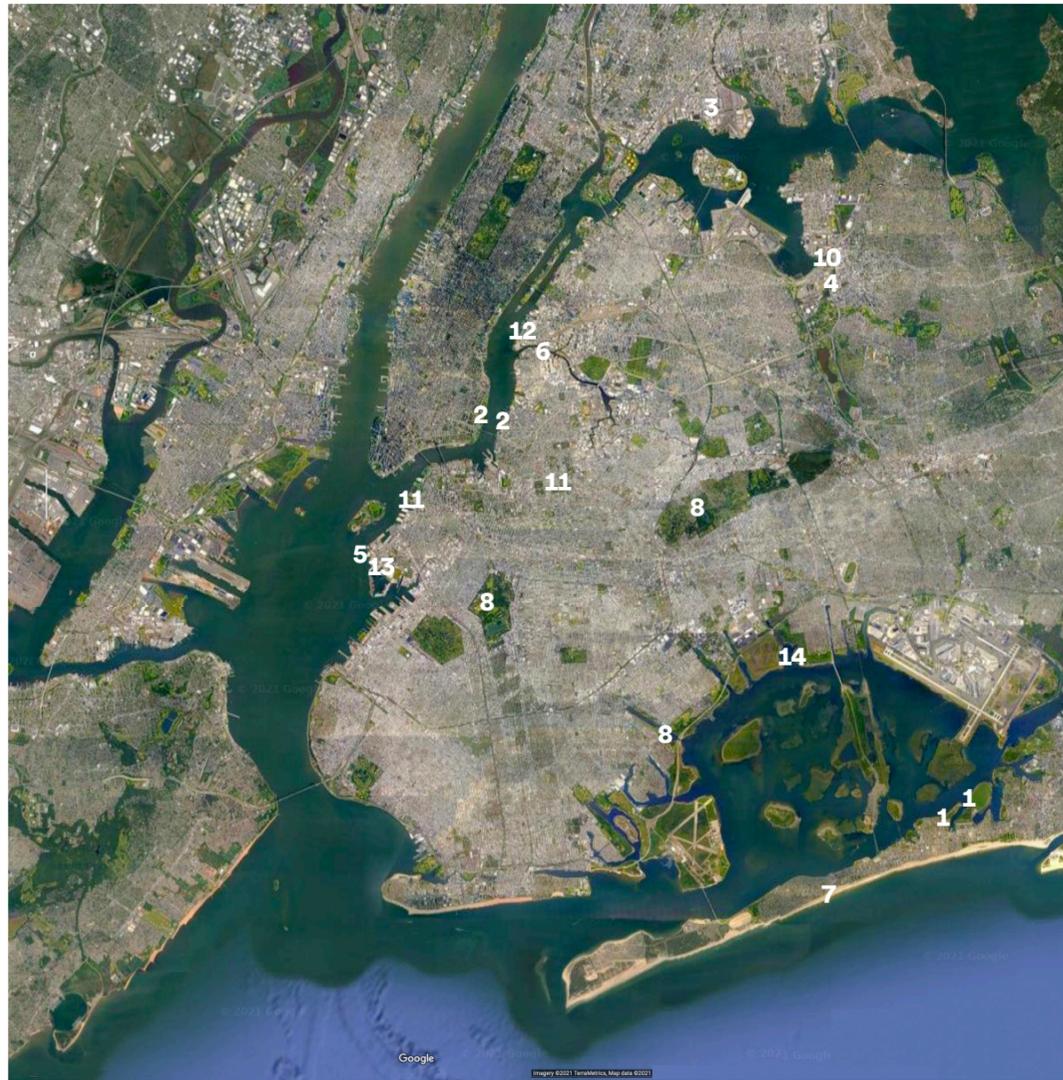


3. Honor Indigenous Land, Water & Treaties: A Land Acknowledgment Campaign
Dennis Redmoon Darkeem

I wanted to give voice to the ideas of care and reference to self-care and honoring the past to inspire

the future: allowing the teachings of our ancestors not to be forgotten, and thinking of care in the present day amongst everything that's happening in society. Taking care of yourself aligns with taking care of your energy. Taking care of your energy allows you to be aware of the energy of others and the importance of your presence in different spaces. I want the understanding of the importance self-reflection, balance and value to resonate as steps to creating significant changes.

All images by Walter Wlodarczyk except for the following: This row: *Honor Indigenous Land, Water & Treaties: A Land Acknowledgment Campaign* Flag artwork courtesy Dennis Redmoon Darkeem; *Welcoming time travelers to Flushing Creek's aquatic life in 2070* photo: Julian Louis; *Yucca: Learning from Wetlands* courtesy Simone Johnson; *Causeway: Reimagining The Waterfront* rendering courtesy Dylan Gauthier.



From May-June 2021, *Tending the Edge* artist projects ranged across 4 boroughs and 7 waterways. They took place on boats and rafts, while wading, walking along the waterfront, in a barge—criss-crossing the city both physically

and conceptually. Artists brought both NYC residents and political candidates to the water, and brought water to them, highlighting and celebrating the deep connection between the life of NYC and the health of our waterways.

2030 is NOW

Climate Change is upon us. Our leaders express shock at its consequences and profess profound sadness, but the probabilities have been known for years. It is a deadly irony that two huge storms landed in NYC right after the urgent report from the International Panel on Climate Change. New York City's waterways are a key to the city's greatness, and yet, they are an increasing liability. The next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (2020-2030) balances industry, economics and wellness with resilience, charting a 10-year course for the city's watery future. It is one piece of a critical framework that must be followed with urgency.



4. Welcoming time travelers to Flushing Creek's aquatic life in 2070
Sunk Shore

Climate change effects are inevitable and already here. Yet, we are surprised when our cities are overwhelmed by flooding, power outages, and food shortages. Flushing Creek, like many urban

waterways, has a legacy of pollution, gentrification, and neglect which puts the surrounding communities—systematically ignored and under-served—at great risk. We believe that a visceral and active sensory experience can increase climate understanding by making data tangible on shorelines where people live their everyday lives. We hope to avoid the worst inevitabilities by inspiring actions within communities and through our local policy makers to invent local sustainable solutions and bring about equitable change.



5. Waterfront Access Points
Zoey Hart

Waterfront Access Points need the care of attention to accessibility. To tend the edge is to care for all bodies—waterbodies, human bodies, ecological bodies, each moving towards a collective wellness we hope to recreate with and within the water. We need to re-learn how to embody care- to listen deeply to physical sensation as an indication of what is well, and what needs more care. Is there a way for Waterfront Access Points to become spaces for embodied listening? That's the kind of care that might re-enliven our sense of connection to the water.



6. (Re)imagining Greenpoint's Green Waters
Ray Jordan Achan

Care for the Creek: I hope that Newtown Creek becomes a body of water more accessible to the public, especially to Black, Brown and immigrant

communities. I hope that long term Greenpoint residents are able to reimagine their relationship to the water which has been polluted over centuries. As a native Greenpoint resident, this was my first time out on the water. I learned so much from Willis Elkins, and Lisa Bloodgood and other members of the Newtown Creek Alliance who continue to engage in community efforts to educate the public on how to restore and revitalize the Creek.



7. Between the Sea and the Shore: Storytelling in Far Rockaway
Ella Mahoney

To tend this edge is to build a relationship with the shore and all the beings who access it. It is creating experiences of joy and awe

to foster care for the land, the sea, and the air. Can we acknowledge the bodies of water that surround us and hold them in the highest regard? I dream that in caring for this ocean edge that grounds us and lifts our spirits, we will also learn to care for each other.



8. Yucca: Learning from Wetlands
Simone Johnson

This is where it all started. I was living in upstate New York last summer

with a good friend who lived near a swamp. I was researching how NYC was preparing for the climate crisis and came across the importance of wetlands. I'd love to see all wetlands in NYC have visible and accessible signs that tell people they are in or near a wetland. The sign could have the Native and colonial names, the name of the place it's located, description of the type of wetland, key information about what a wetland ecosystem is and who is caring for the wetland.

ADDITIONAL TENDING THE EDGE PROJECTS:
12. Pulp Mobile: Papermaking on the Edge of the East River: Rejin Leys used public space and paper recycling to prompt interaction and discussion between neighbors.



9. Causeway: Envisioning Expanded Water Access at and Beyond the Edge
Dylan Gauthier

Dwelling in the power of the architectural rendering to inform policy decisions and public opinion, Causeway asks us to come together to consider ways to care for alternate futures

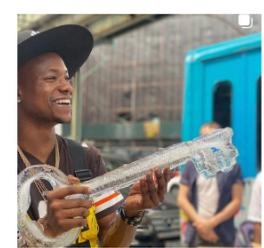
for urban waterways and waterways. Drawing on historic maps and future visioning exercises with the public, *Causeway* informs a conversation on rewilding, de-engineering, and unplanning in New York City. What would the NYC's coastline(s) look like if they looked more like those of the recent past? How might we bring wild elements, a direct encounter with natural systems, and experiential learning into the urban built environment and reshape our relationship to nature at the same time?



10. Brownfield Boating
Cody Ann Herrmann

Brownfield Boating took NYC Council District 20 and 21 candidates on paddling tours of Flushing Creek in collaboration with Guardians of Flushing Bay. Candidates checked in on oysters, explored combined sewage overflows, and envisioned how climate change and

development will impact the Flushing Creek coastline. District 20 candidate, Sandra Ung, poised to win her race, sat in silence for most of the tour with nothing to say about the impacts of development on the area, however, the disproportionate amount of sewage overflow in Flushing Creek seemed to get her attention, she expressed outrage— something to remember throughout her upcoming term.



11. Key from the City
Nancy Nowacek

Citizens give their leaders keys to the city, so to speak, in elections. Each vote is a key designating that candidate worthy of gaining access to all of the beauty and challenges that make up a city. Now,

For more information on Tending the Edge: worksonwater.org/events/tending-the-edge

imagine if that key were made from waters drawn from the New York City harbor, and frozen...but melting. New York City's waters are one of its most glorious features and resources—its lifeblood, really—and tending to their capacity to flow, transport, nurture, and heal must be one of the central priorities of all future city administrations. Without these waters, New York City would be just another chunk of asphalt and concrete. I hope all future New York City mayors remember that fact.