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MOTHERS' SACRED BOND

MLS Capstone Project Presented

by

Lenett Partlow-Myrick

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Professional Studies

Defense Date: August 20, 2020

Committee:

Bhanu Kapil, MFA

Matt Kolan, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

“Mothers’ Sacred Bond” is a community arts project inspired by Baltimore city’s self-proclaimed African nationalist “cultural community” of the 1970s to early 1990s. The project evolved over a 12-month period, beginning in August 2019, from the idea of researching leadership practices of that community to an environmental arts installation that will be fully erected in Gwynnvale Park in Baltimore, County, MD, in April 2021. The intention for the project is to provide a focal point in community for individual and collective healing and contemplation of relationships between human beings, the earth, and natural elements while fostering a consciousness of respect for all beings.

The pivotal element of the installation is a 6-foot avatar made of wicker, glass beads, copper wire, and canvas patches and representing mitochondrial Eve, the most recently acknowledged matrilineal ancestor of humankind. During the project implementation period from January through September 2020, community members, two arts organizations, and a multimedia production company have become involved in presenting and making the avatar art piece available to the public. In addition, representatives of local environmental protection agencies are involved in planning for the installation’s complete construction next year, which will include a small labyrinth, herb garden, the avatar mounted on the banks of Maryland’s historic Gwynns Falls stream in Gwynnvale Park. The primary methods employed to implement project plans included a rigorous creative process and building relationships with personnel responsible for the management of Baltimore County natural resources, parks and watersheds in the creation, placement, construction, and maintenance of the environmental arts installation. This project also demonstrates how artists can support initiatives, policies, and programs of city and county environmental agencies through collaborative planning and creative contributions to parks, public trails, greenspaces, and the sustainability thereof.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With deep appreciation for their loving and ongoing contributions to the “Mothers’ Sacred Bond” project, I thank my husband, Ricardo C. W. Myrick, for chronicling the project’s evolution in numerous photographs and many hours of video footage. I am equally grateful for the pro bono support of my son, Imani Muleyyar, and his company iBvidpro for helping me develop the project’s first promotional video presented at the 2020 MLS Summit. Much gratitude also to the Hamilton Gallery Arts Collective; Rashida Forman-Bey; Melodie Kauff; curators Heidi Grunnman and Jillian Storm of the Leakin Park Nature Art in the Park exhibit; Steven Lee; Two Trees Sullivan; Schroeder Cherry; William Rhodes; Gail Kromah; Michael Glaser; and Annie Sanchez of Baltimore County Recreation and Parks for your commitment in helping me to bring this project to community.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Our job is to ask questions, and if we ask enough good questions, we become entitled to one guess at an answer—and if it’s a good guess, it will lead to more questions”

(Meredith qtd. in Glaser, 2019).

The genesis of my capstone project began in early August of 2019 with the idea to research the leadership practices of Baltimore’s self-proclaimed African nationalist “cultural community” during the 1970s to early 1990s and how those practices have influenced the lifestyles, careers, families, and choices of youth and adults who composed that cultural enclave. We were a movement. We were parents, educators, students, activists, entrepreneurs, social workers, doctors, government employees, administrators, artists, performers, property owners, and spiritual gurus who embraced and celebrated our African heritage. We shared a commitment to becoming a totally sustainable community by creating our own educational and arts institutions; wellness and health systems; businesses; agricultural production; product development and distribution centers; and financial infrastructure. We lived and worked throughout the city and raised our children together in that consciousness, according to the principles of the Nguzo Saba: Unity (Umoja), Self-Determination (Kujichagulia); Collective Work and Responsibility (Ujima); Cooperative Economics (Ujamaa); Purpose (Nia); Creativity (Kuumba) and Faith (Imani).

We did all of that.

But then something changed in the cultural community from the inside or as a result of outside forces. It is hard to tell. Upon sharing my initial capstone idea with people from “back in the day,” I was surprised that they, too, wanted to explore *what happened*. One thing was for

certain, everyone I talked to believes the research would be a contribution African American her/history in Baltimore.

A month later in September, I attended a presentation by renowned teacher, poet, scholar, and former Maryland Poet Laureate Michael Glaser. In his presentation, which occurred in the middle of our Methodology module, Dr. Glaser explored through prose and poetry how “[e]vocative art often pushes us to ask uncomfortable questions about ways we have framed our understanding about ourselves and our world,” and “how the challenge of art can lead us toward more mindful and compassionate lives.”

Dr. Glaser’s presentation was the beginning of the unraveling of my original idea. I woke up a couple of days later to the unsettling realization that however useful the research could be on many levels, that idea did not encompass my specific leadership focus as an artist and spiritual activist nor did it allow me to apply leadership practices honed and adopted during the MLS two-year program, as reflected in my first and second rounds of essential questions (see Appendix A).

A new idea for project came to me as a vision, i.e., mental picture, of a sculpted bench made of bits and pieces of the African American experience, including my family’s stories, and located in an accessible public park/green space. This outdoor art installation, as I defined it, would serve as a place where people could come to meditate, contemplate, and appreciate their relationship to Mother Earth and nature.

My overall intention was to create something out of authentic self-expression that is a contribution to community, that fosters shared principles and value among people, and that has meaning for this time and beyond. The process of bringing the idea into existence confirms as much.



CHAPTER 2: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

2.1. Step 1 (Nov. – Dec. 2019): Conversations & Threads

Although the process of bringing a piece of art to life can be a solitary affair, the creation of this project evolves from a series of conversations with my capstone advisor, Bhanu Kapil. Upon first sharing the concept of the outdoor art installation with Bhanu, she suggested a tree in its midst, and the entire project took on new form. That subtle suggestion was a brilliant addition of element of nature that could stand as a centerpiece to amplify the relational aspect of the installation between people and nature. Such was the nature of our brainstorming sessions that gave birth to more essential questions; references and artists to explore; considerations for sites, materials, next steps; and deeper dives into the meaning and purpose of the installation, as illustrated in the graphic below (enlarge view to see details). Our conversations over these past nine months were and continue to be foundational to the project's evolution.

2.2. Step 2 (Jan. 2020 – Feb.): Interviews

Out of respect for the Piscataway people who have lived for centuries on this land we call Maryland, I began by contacted the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs in January 2020 to inform them of my project and request support in finding an acceptable site in their eyes for my installation. Although the Commission Chair at that time was friendly and open to my request, he never sent the promised contact information for native commissioners nor responded to my follow up calls. I focused instead on conducting a series of interviews per my project implementation plan. Because I live in a city filled with seasoned, knowledgeable African American artists and culture keepers, it made sense to begin my primary research in Baltimore.

Artist and scholar Schroeder Cherry, Ph.D., gave me great sources on the legacy of African American art, outdoor art installation and helped me to contextualize my capstone

project from the perspective of African American art as *a thematic focus* and art as something created for functional purposes rather than for exhibit, which is a European construct.

Although he now resides in San Francisco, CA, I next sought the insights of Baltimore-native, artist, and activist Willian Rhodes. His belief that “the spirit and characteristics of materials lend themselves to a particular piece of art” got me thinking about materials to use and respecting the sacredness of things made. (Rhodes 2020).

Baltimore artist, cultural activist, museum director, scholar, and nature lover Steven Lee helped me to see how art created at the crossroads of nature, her/history, and culture informs our sense and understanding of place. He cautioned me to consider that wherever I chose to erect the installation, I will be entering an ecosystem that is a *community* of living beings of various species who must be honored, respected, integrated into the design and constructions (Lee 2020).

Steven also explained that what I was attempting to create was an *environmental installation*, which has unique characteristics different from outdoor installations. With that conversation and leads from Bhanu to research the works of environmental artists Cornelia Konrad, Kara Walker and Walter Hood, the former vision of the capstone project with artsy bench built around a tree began to shift and take on another form.

However, it was the interview with Two Trees aka Kaylynn Sullivan that set this capstone project on its present path to a thing created in and for nature as the audience and receiver of the thing. And while we covered a lot of creative, artistic, “making things” territory, it was that singular point of clarity about “nature as the audience” (Sullivan 2020) that made me realize this project was not a performance piece for public consumption, but a conversation with and a love offering to nature.

Altogether, these interviews served as a means of gathering stories, understanding different perspectives on the role of visual artists in community in the twenty-first century, and identifying distinguishing qualities of African American art.

2.3. Step 3 (Mar. – Apr.): Finding an Installation Site

Then the covid-19 pandemic happened. I had planned to start visiting potential installation sites in the Baltimore metropolitan vicinity beginning at the Spring equinox, but most parks, forests, and public green space venues in Maryland were closed. Therefore, I had to consider possible sites outside and within walking distance of my Baltimore county home, including my back yard and, just a few blocks away, a quarter mile of woods bordering my development and the Gwynns Falls stream. I had to also consider how my installation might impact animals, birds, trees, and insects in both environments. And if it if the installation is to serve nature and make nature its primary audience, then public appeal would not be a priority.

Because all art supply and Home Depot stores in my area were also closed, I released the idea of making a sculptured bench and instead turned my attention to the one potentially workable thing in my home: a naked wicker manikin. Once again, the vision changed. Around this time, I learned about a small neighborhood park where the Gwynns Falls stream flows southeast to the Patapsco River. After a few walks around the park's 1.5-mile terrain, I came to an area by the stream where trees encircled a grassy patch on three sides. The ground was level and wide enough to accommodate the new idea of a regular park bench placed in front of one of the surrounding trees to face the manikin in the center of the grassy area.

2.4. Step 4 (May): Forging Relationships

Finding Gwynndale Park gave me an opportunity to apply Two Trees and Matt Kolan's relational protocol to building relationships with local and county government staff who could confirm the installation site. This step required patience in that state and city government offices were closed, employees were unavailable by phone, and everyone was trying to figure out how to navigate changes and restrictions imposed by covid-19 regulations. Public-facing staff were available only through email and it took weeks, in most cases, to reach managerial level staff. Personnel from the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS), the Waterway Improvement Programs, Parks and Recreation offices eventually responded and were extremely helpful in providing information, data, and reports that put the project in a much broader context. Given the current toxic condition of the Gwynns Falls stream, the increase of trash that comes with suburban sprawl, and the decline of trees in the area due to insects, diseases and abiotic problems, I had to consider how my installation would fit into this ecosystem.

The more tedious part of this step involved writing proposals for Parks and Recreation management, which forced me to finally draft a conceptual design of the installation. In addition to the bench, I envision a round flowered trellis marking the entrance to a short labyrinth leading up to the manikin. The Community Supervisor for Gwynnvale Park, Annie Sacher, met with me to see and approve the requested area for the installation. I was grateful for her request to handle my ethnobotanical considerations and select herbs to be planted around the manikin's base.

2.5. Step 5 (June): Field Research

Kimberly Knox from the Baltimore Department of Environmental Protection and curators Jillian Storm and Heidi Grundman of the Friends of Leakin Park Nature Art in the Park program were equally helpful in providing me with addresses and park maps to urban art and nature art installations that prompted a month of field research. I wanted to know how other artists are contributing to their environments. Colorful murals and graffiti, rock sculptures and de/reconstructed doors, yarn laced trees and poles are laced and threaded on buildings, in alleys, overgrown green spaces, and neighborhood walkways throughout the city. I was especially astounded by a color-filled urban installation created from discarded furniture and newly planted fruit trees in an alley between two blocks of mostly boarded up houses.

Gwynns Falls Leakin Park is the site of the Nature Art in the Park exhibit featuring a cornucopia of figurines, mobiles, sculptures, look-out installations, and compelling creations made of natural elements and mounted along the park's northwestern trails that take you up, down, and deeper into the woods to listen, see, and feel what environment is communicating as described by author and journalist Winifred Gallagher. In *The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions and Actions*, Gallagher draws on research from the fields of behavioral and environmental sciences to explain the complexities of our relationships to places, while also examining the many ways in which places affect our lived experiences and ways of being.

I was invited to participate in the exhibit and soon after found a location for the installation at the juncture of two trails, on a ridge that overlooked a large section of the park's western valley. However, because of the "ambitious" scope of the installation and the location's

space limitations, we decided to install only the centerpiece concept without herbs planted at its base.

2.6. Step 6 (July – Aug.): Construction

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Inspired by this field research and leads from Bhanu to other environmental artists, I began to construct the centerpiece for my installation. I drew from the magic, mystery, and aesthetic of Cornelia Konrad’s “land art” and Kara Walker’s “The Sugar Sphinx: A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby” bleached sugar sculpture. I studied the intricacies of “MOTHER...,” an environmental installation created by artists Heather Peak and Ivan Morrison. I also considered adding the African American spiritual-ritual tradition of bottle trees as described by artist and art historian David Driskell in my Annotated Bibliography (see Appendix B). Based on suggestions from interviewed artists and the Nature Art in the Park exhibit, I decided to use only natural elements of wood, glass, and metal in my installation.

The wicker manikin’s identity as an avatar of mitochondrial Eve emerged from a documentary on ancient Africa. She required chocolate acrylic paint for the melanin in her skin; glass beads for her molecules; copper wire for veins and chi; and canvas patches representing her offspring. She would also require soil to plant and anchor her into the ground, and instead of planting herbs around her base, one hand would emerge from the soil to represent the hand of Mother Earth. At this point, my process was all intuitive pathwinding (see Appendix C).

I have never beaded anything made of wicker. Fortunately, the manikin’s head was removable but made of the most tightly woven wicker I could have imagined. She required a crown of African trade beads around the center of her head made by stringing beads on copper wire and

weaving beaded wire strands around the head. This same process was required for the avatar's body, which is laced in different sizes of colored beads.

At some point while beading, another black man was murdered. It did not matter how or why. She required names and faces printed on canvas sheets, then cut into 2" by 3" squares stained with coffee grinds to give the canvas cloth a sepia tone and punctured with brass grommet eyelets through which small pieces of wire were looped and attached to the wicker skin. Finally, she required a plaster cast—which I have also never made—of my hand to represent Mother Earth's hand, also coffee grind stained and painted an exact hue of Georgia-red clay. She required a crystal teardrop held between two fingers and a bunch of teardrops held in the palm of the plaster hand at the end of which a silk rose was affixed (see Appendix D).

By the time mitochondrial Eve's avatar was complete, I was clear that she was not a material fit for the Nature Art in the Park exhibit. While made of natural elements, her body was antithetical to the exhibit's material theme.

2.7. Step 7 (Aug.): Temporary Installation

Mitochondrial Eve will be on exhibit at Baltimore art galleries from September 2020 through March of 2021, including the Hamilton Gallery, where I am an exhibiting artist member. In this way, people will have an opportunity to experience the piece before she takes up permanent resident in an outdoor site.

2.8. Step 8 (Aug.): Results, Next Steps & Key Learnings

Like Baltimore's African nationalist cultural community, the creation of this capstone project teaches me that nothing designed and intended for the collective good of a community over a period of time can fully manifest without its members' involvement in the planning,

implementation, creation, and sustainment of that thing. The installation will be grounded in Gwynnvale Park in the spring of 2021. Annie Sanchez from Baltimore County Parks and Recreation and I have planned to reconnect later this year to explore ways of getting community members involved in erecting and caring for the installation. Meanwhile, I look forward to connecting with the community arm of the county's EPS agency, which will resume meetings in September after being on hiatus due to covid-19.

I have since learned that a new Chair has been appointed to the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, and plan to contact her to pick up where the former Chair left me hanging.

2.9. Step 9: Evaluation & Assessment

Based on feedback given in the defense session, I now realize that my capstone presentation would have been much stronger with more information about my process. Still, the feedback received from people who attended the presentation has been very positive. In addition, several artists from Hamilton Gallery who have seen Eve up close have given feedback on the quality of my work. As this was my first time working with glass beads and wire in this way, I am pleased with my results. I am especially humbled by the ways in which the piece has touched and resonated with people who have seen it only via video. I now see how my capstone project is a part of the Baltimore metropolitan area's body of environment art installations.

References

Glaser Ph.D., Michael. "Courage, Imagination and the Disrupting Voices of Art." The Baltimore Ethical Society, Village Learning Place Central Library, Baltimore, 14 Sept. 2019. Presentation.

Lee, Steven. Personal Interview. 9 Feb. 2020.

Rhodes, William. Personal Interview. 4 Feb. 2020.

Sullivan, Kaylynn Two Trees. Personal Interview. 11 Feb. 2020

APPENDIX A:
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1st Round of Essential Capstone Questions

1. Where am I and what am I doing/being/creating as an artist that is a contribution to humankind?
2. What happens to a soul that never stretches into the depths of her capacity to create?
3. What is at stake, i.e., what are the consequences of never taking the call to stretch oneself as never before, boldly, courageously, confidently?
4. What is my responsibility as an African American artist at this time?
5. What do I give voice to when I feel so much about so many things?
6. How do I create art that fosters African American cultural sustainability in all its complexities?

2nd Round of Essential Capstone Questions

1. What is the greatest contribution I can make/give to everyone and everything on the planet, including myself, right now and for all posterity? Is it possible to leave a footprint, so to speak, on the earth that is a lasting contribution?
2. What and where are the places in the world that are considered “power places” and sacred, healing spaces for people, 4-leggeds, et al., and have proven to be so as documented by various sources?
3. What is the concentric impact of places and energy vortexes on the lives and health of people, animals, insects, plant-life, and other beings?
4. What and where are the art installations in the world that were created to align with the Earth’s major arteries/energy grid?
5. I have observed that images are prominent in and central to the art of many legacy African American artists. What are other distinguishing qualities of legacy African American art?
6. What and where are the outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed?
7. What am I learning about living at the intersection of deeply held desires to (1) be the best contribution possible to all my relations now, throughout all dimensions, and for posterity; (2) create art that is a fulfilling spiritual ceremony when I am creating it; (3) create art that touches people’s hearts/souls/minds; and (4) create art that generates income toward my financial sustainability?

Methodology

Honestly, I have not yet created time to delve fully into all the reading materials for these two modules, enough to talk intelligently about a methodology that supports and fits my essential

questions. However, I am committed to doing that work in the coming week. My initial thoughts are that my methodology will involve the following:

1. Anchoring in spiritual practices of listening, meditation, contemplation, ceremony & divination
2. Defining cultural sustainability
3. Defining African American aesthetics
4. Researching “legacy” visual art works by African Americans
5. Gathering stories from living legend African American artists
6. Surveying African American culture keepers re: the role of visual artists and the relationship of visual to community in the 21st century
7. Creating a team of elders to guide and advise me on project(s) born in this capstone experience
8. Conducting interviews with “legacy” African American artists

APPENDIX B:
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lenett Partlow-Myrick
Prof. Matthew Kolan
Capstone Project
21 October 2019

Annotated Bibliography

Als, Hilton. "The Sugar Sphinx." *The New Yorker*, Culture Desk, 8 May 2014,

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-sugar-sphinx>.

Upon mention in an email from my capstone adviser, Bhanu Kapil, I was compelled to research renowned African American artist Kara Walker's "The Sugar Sphinx: A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby" sculpture, to find a conceptual path into the design phase of my project. As Al's points out, Walker's "visual production" is part "diaristic in tone," part historical, and part cultural commentary on the journey of African descendant people in America from the seventeenth century to the present. Al's further reports that Walker's Sugar Sphinx is "a mammy-as-sphinx made out of bleached sugar, which is a metaphor and reality. Remember, sugar is brown in its "raw" state," and "She has 'black' features but is white? Has she been bleached—and thus made more 'beautiful'—or is she a spectre of history, the female embodiment of all the human labor that went into making her?" Walker's sculpture provides insight into my questions regarding use of materials in outdoor/environmental installations and one answer to the question of where to find art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed.

Berry, Wendell. *Wendell Berry: New Collected Poems*. Counterpoint Press, April. 2013

Several years ago I had the great and peaceful pleasure of coming under renowned poet Wendell Berry's spell during a 4-day poetry retreat, *Bread for the Journey*, in the

mountains of central Pennsylvania and hosted by another exquisite poet-friend, Michael Glaser. That spell has cast a long shadow and it feels most fitting to bring his poetry, legacy of environmental activism, and “straightforward search for a life connected to the soil” (*The New York Times Book Review*) to this capstone project as a source of inspiration, a beacon, perhaps a whisper at every stage of its development.

Bryant, Page. *The Spiritual Reawakening of the Great Smoky Mountains*. Page Bryant, © 1994.

Although the intended audience for this book appears to be “spiritual seekers” instead of scholars, teacher, author and psychic Page Bryant provides a good starting point for me to research sacred, healing “power places” around the world; the legacy and lives of peoples who have been stewards of those places; and specific characteristics that define the power and “medicine” of those places. I am especially interested in Bryant’s knowledge of grids and ley line systems; how one place, e.g., the Great Smoky Mountains, connects with other power places around the planet; and how those connections affect human, animal, plant life forms. The book addresses my essential question re: What and where are the places in the world that are considered power places and sacred, healing spaces for people, 4-leggeds, et al., and have proven to be so as documented by various sources?

Cherry Ph.D., Schroeder. Personal Interview. 30 Jan. 2020.

Because I live in a city filled with legendary, renowned African American artists whose works are great contributions to American culture, common sense tells me to begin my primary research here in Baltimore with artist, scholar, and former National Director of Museums Schroeder Cherry. Dr. Cherry is a master puppeteer, painter, and sculptor whose black angels, railroad porters, and barbershop series embody the best and strongest elements of the African American portrait legacies. Given Dr. Cherry’s wealth of

knowledge on the history of African and African American art, I looked forward to his answers to my essential questions re: What are the distinguishing qualities and legacy African American art? And, what/where are the outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed? Although he directed me to several sources to answer the last question, he helped me to begin contextualizing my capstone project from the perspective of African American art as a thematic focus and art being about more than things created for exhibit, which is a European construct, but things made for functional, utilitarian purposes that others define as art. He was also instrumental in advising me on natural materials to consider, including glass and metal.

Driskell, David C. "The 'Bottle Tree.'" *National Visionary Leadership Project*, 17 Mar. 2010, www.visionaryproject.org/driskelldavid/

According to David Driskell's many biographies, he is an internationally lauded scholar, professor, curator, art collector and one of the world's leading authorities on African American art. In this short video interview, Mr. Driskell discusses the African American spiritual-ritual tradition of bottle trees and the origins of this practice in West Africa. This interview intrigues me because the idea for my capstone project, an outdoor art installation, will encompass a tree and hold pieces of African American spiritual traditions, myths, folklore, and earth-based practices. The bottle tree tradition seems like a logical fit to the project. I will also explore Dr. Robert Farris Thompson's research, mentioned in this video interview, and the research of others on the bottle tree tradition as along with other writings and published works by Mr. Driskell as related to my capstone project.

Gallagher, Winifred. *The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions and Actions*. HarperCollins, 1993.

In this book, author and journalist Winifred Gallagher explores the connections and relationships between people and places, including their homes, workspaces, play areas, and public spaces. Winifred draws on research from the fields of behavioral and environmental sciences to explain the complexities of our relationships to places, which she defines in very broad terms, while also examining the many ways in which places affect our lived experiences and expressions of being. This book is one of the cornerstones of my research in understanding how and why people resonate with certain places and the elements/objects therein as well as the various natural and human-made elements that influence human experience and people's quality of life. The book specifically addresses my essential question re: What is the concentric impact of power places and energy vortexes on the lives and health of people, animals, insects, plant-life, and other beings?

Glaser Ph.D, Michael. "Courage, Imagination and the Disrupting Voices of Art." The Baltimore Ethical Society, Village Learning Place Central Library, Baltimore, 14 Sept. 2019. Presentation.

Any occasion to sit with renowned teacher, poet, scholar, and former Maryland Poet Laureate Michael Glaser is a gift. The description of this presentation states: "Evocative art often pushes us to ask uncomfortable questions about ways we have framed our understanding about ourselves and our world." With the skill of a master weaver, Dr. Glaser pulls together threads of wisdom from his and other artists' poems that "explore how the challenge of art can lead us toward more mindful and compassionate lives." This

presentation was most instrumental in helping me to uncover and discover unexplored essential questions (submitted 20 Sept. 2019) regarding my role, work, and intentions for being a contribution through my art. The poems and wisdom Dr. Glaser shared in this presentation continue to inspire my capstone process.

“Introduction: The Culture of Ethnobotany.” Presented by Will McClatchey. RPh, PhD, 73rd St. Productions, YouTube, 14 May 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=mymkyvBXnzk

I first heard mention of ethnobotanical gardens from landscape and public artist Walter Hood, and decided to explore that topic which led me to this video. Will McClatchey is an ethnobiologist, a professor of botany with specialization in conservation ethnobiology, and Vice President of Research at Botanical Research Institute of Texas. McClatchey invites me to consider not only how I might include ethnobotanical wisdom in designing my installation but how knowledge of ethnobotany informs my question re: the impact of sacred, healing spaces and places where people, 4-leggeds, et al., live. He says, “languages are place-specific, and if you really want to understand a place, you really need to understand the language of that place.” Surely, the botanical elements of a place are included in its language.

Jobson, Christopher. “Gravity-Defying Land Art by Cornelia Konrads [updated].” Colossal, 24 Apr. 2012, www.thisiscolossal.com/2012/04/gravity-defying-land-art-by-cornelia-konrads/

My capstone project adviser, Bhanu Kapil, sent me a link to this online article about an astonishing, extraordinary piece of “land art” that embodies the magic, mystery, and aesthetic of my envisioned installation. Konrads is an internationally renowned artist and creator of installations for public and private gardens, parks, spaces as well as what she

calls “Buchobjekte” (Book Objects). Her installations directly answer my question re: materials to use in outdoor/environmental installations and how to create installations that embody and harmonize with the natural aesthetics, qualities, character, etc., of the environment in which they are created. There’s not much more that I can say about her work except that her installations are my guiding models for what I want to create for this project and going forward. This source helps answer my question re: what and where are the places in the world that are considered power places and sacred, healing spaces for people, 4-leggeds, et al., and have proven.

Kromah, Gail. Personal Interview. 18 Feb. 2020

Although he is now an ancestor, an exploration of the work and contributions of artist Ernes Kromah via an interview with his widow, Gail Kromah, will undoubtedly lead me to answers to my essential questions re: What are the distinguishing qualities of legacy African American art? And, what/where are the outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed? An excerpt from his bio conveys that Ernest was “an American artist whose work transcends definition. His masterpieces are inundated with rich vibrant colors, textures and designs that conjure highly sensual, spiritual emotions, and concepts of the known and unknown. Ernest is also known for creating customized works based upon concept and décor of a space or a specific concept for showcasing.” It is his lasting impression on specific spaces and places in Baltimore City that I was excited to discuss with Mrs. Kromah. What I gained most from our conversation with the necessity for preserving works created for posterity and the necessity of gaining

committed community support for art preservation, which gives me cause to consider how this capstone project (art installation) will be maintained in the future.

Lee, Steven. Personal Interview. 9 Feb. 2020.

Steven Lee is a legendary Baltimore African American artist, historian, cultural activist, museum director, scholar, and nature lover who effectively promotes and helps to sustain creative works of historical, cultural and environmental significance. Through his leadership and work with urban parks, he has also raised citizens' awareness of how art created at the crossroads of nature, her/history, and culture informs our sense and understanding of place. In talking with Mr. Lee about distinguishing qualities and the legacy African American art, outdoor art installations created by African Americans, and recommended materials for outdoor installations, he helped me to understand that what I am attempting to create is, in essence, an *environmental* installation, which has unique characteristics that are different from outdoor installations. He also made me realize that wherever I choose to install the installation, I will be entering not only an ecosystem but a *community* of living beings of various species who must be honored, respected, integrated into the design and constructions. In addition, he cautioned that I be mindful of choosing materials that are indigenous to the area where I will build the site and bringing in nonindigenous materials that are foreign to the area. This interview totally shifted my initial concept for the capstone project toward a creation of purposeful service.

Maddedu Ph.D., Manuela and Xiaoqing Zhang. "Harmonious Spaces: The Influence of Feng Shui on Urban Form and Design." *Journal of Urban Design* 22 (6): 709–725. doi: 10.1080/13574809.2017.1336061, 2017.

As a student of Feng Shui for over 20 years now, I believe that an exploration of the relationships of people to places is not complete without a discussion of Feng Shui, the ancient art-science of placement. This paper provides a comprehensive definition and description of Feng Shui; discusses its influence on culture and socio-cultural values; and describes how Feng Shui is applied in domestic and commercial spaces, and urban planning and design. Lead writer for this paper, scholar and architect Manuela Maddedu's Ph.D. research focused on public engagement in pursuit of sustainable development through the UK planning system. This paper helps me to appreciate the possibilities of bringing Feng Shui and other indigenous practices of harmonizing people with environments "within the cultures of [urban] planning regulation and decision making." This paper further helps to answer my essential question re: What is the concentric impact of power places and energy vortexes on the lives and health of people, animals, insects, plant-life, and other beings?

"MOTHER. . . at Wicken Fen by Studio Morison." *The National Trust*, 2019,

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen-nature-reserve/features/mother--at-wicken-fen-by-studio-morison

This source came to me via my capstone adviser, Bhanu Kapil, and contextualizes the work I intend to create for the project. This source provides insight into my question regarding outdoor art installations that are indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed/created. "MOTHER..." created by artists Heather Peak and Ivan Morrison, is said to be "inspired by the restorative qualities of the beautiful fen landscape as described in Richard Mabey's book 'Nature Cure', and childhood memories of visiting the Fens and the Wash." This description gives me reason to explore the restorative

qualities of the environment selected for my installation and to consider how those qualities can be infused into the installation design. “Mother . . .” certainly encompasses one of the initial intentions for the project to provide people with place of rest, contemplation, and connection with nature. Ivan Morrison further explains that the installation also provides “an opportunity to perhaps still the mind for a while by [focusing] on the simple material qualities of the work, and the changing nature of the landscape that surrounds it.” The installation also gives me another consideration for public interaction that yields to co-ownership via naming of the installation. As explained, “The ellipsis after MOTHER... suggests the omission of a second word to be added by the viewer . . .”. Finally, like other sources researched for this project, “Mother . . .” makes me realize how important it is to include as much of the ethnobotany, natural elements, culture, stories, and his/herstory into the installation along with “references [to] local building traditions, materials and architectural vernacular to root the structure in the very landscape it is a part of.” This source helps answer my question re: what and where are the places in the world that are considered power places and sacred, healing spaces for people, 4-leggeds, et al., and have proven to be so as documented by various sources?

Reid, James Earl. Personal Interview. Date TBD

As Mr. Reid’s historic outdoor public sculptures are hallmarks of his oeuvre, I am certain that he can provide enlightening answers to my essential questions re: What are the distinguishing qualities of legacy African American art? And, what/where are the outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed? He is best known for his sculpture of jazz legend Billie Holiday and his commissioned sculpture, titled “Third World

America: A Contemporary Nativity,” of a homeless family holding a newborn child over a steam vent, and featuring the words “And still there is no room at the inn” on the base. The latter work led to a landmark Supreme Court case where Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote the decision in favor of Reid and all independent contractors who argued for the rights of artists to retain their creative and intellectual property.

Rhodes, William. Personal Interview. 4 Feb. 2020.

Although he now resides in San Francisco, CA, I look forward to this Baltimore-native, activist artist’s answers to my essential questions re: What are the distinguishing qualities of legacy African American art? And, what/where are the outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed? Although Mr. Rhodes suggested sources to answer the latter question, he provided me with a wealth of information on my first question as well as advice on natural and recycled materials to consider for the installation. Mr. Rhodes has created a stunning body of work that addresses and explores miscegenation, lynching, spiritual practices, and various aspects of African American. Rhodes believes that “the spirit and characteristics of materials lend themselves to a particular piece of art.”

Sams, Jamie. Sacred Path Cards™: The Discovery of Self Through Native Teachings. HarpersCollinsPublishers, 1990.

This may appear as a strange a strange source to include in an academic annotated bibliography, but Sams presents such a thorough understanding of Native people’s wisdom teachings and practices that cannot be overlooked or minimized. Sams’ lessons and shared experiences on human relations with all beings and forms of creation

inhabiting this earth, i.e., standing people, creature beings, stone people, etc., have opened my eyes and heart to the Native people's perspectives on the sacredness of life. Her complex, rich and provocative teachings give me much to consider with regard to ways of entering, engaging, and communicating with everything within the ecosystem(s) where my environment installation capstone project may be installed. This source also helps me answer questions re: materials to use for the installation with considerations for the her/history of possible sites for the installation.

Scott, Joyce J. Personal Interview. Date TBS

Ms. Scott is one of the most distinguished American artists living and working in our times. Ms. Scott's collective bios present an outstanding body of work that speaks to her contributions to the world canon of contemporary art. Ms. Scott is not only "renowned for her [artistic] social commentary on issues such as racism, classism, sexism, violence, and cultural stereotypes, as well as themes of spiritual healing" but is cherished as a Baltimore legend and patron saint of local artists. Her most recent and largest exhibition/outdoor installation, "Harriet Tubman and Other Truths," "was seen as a catalyst for transforming the public space created by J. Seward Johnson." It will be an honor to receive her answers to my essential questions re: What are the distinguishing qualities of legacy African American art? And, what/where are the outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed?

Sullivan, Kaylynn Two Trees. Personal Interview. 11 Feb. 2020

How in the world can I interview all of the aforementioned artists and not consider interviewing our own amazing Two Trees aka Kaylynn Sullivan for her answers to my

essential questions re: What are the distinguishing qualities of legacy African American art? And, what/where are the outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed? Our conversation was a turning point in my capstone conceptualization, from a piece of art I would create for public consumption to a thing created in and for nature as the audience and receiver of the thing. And while we covered a lot of creative, artistic, “making things” territory, it was that singular point of clarity that made me realize this project is not a performance piece but an offering.

“Walter Hood.” *MacArthur Fellows Program*. MacArthur Foundation, 25 Sept. 2019, www.macfound.org/fellows/1040/

This source also came to me via my capstone adviser, Bhanu Kapil, and has expanded my understanding of essential elements to consider in my environmental installation design, especially as it relates to the history and cultural of a place and how that information may inform my design. This source opens deeper inquiries into my question regarding outdoor art installations created by African Americans that are sources of inspiration and indelible parts of the environments in which they are installed?

Wardlaw, Alvia J. *Black Art Ancestral Legacy: The African Impulse in African-American Art*. Dallas Museum of Art. 1 Nov. 1989.

This author came highly recommended as another authority on African American art, although I was unsure how relative this particular catalogue on an art exhibition including essays that “examine the impact of African culture” would be to my project. However, in following the impulse to research pieces of African American spiritual and earth-based traditions for inclusion in my capstone project, I learned that this book, with an

Introduction by David Driskell, does in fact discuss ceremonial objects and earth-related works of art as well as “African myths and motifs” in contemporary African American art. Therefore, it will be well worth reading to see how it will inform the design and construction of my capstone project.

“Watershed Moments: Keepers of the Stream.” Hosted by Johnny Olszewski with Sarah

Witcher. *Hello Baltimore County*, produced by Clean Green Baltimore County,

YouTube, 24, Jun. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4jz6BK9rbo&feature=youtu.be>

This video is a product of the Clean Green Baltimore County program committed to “environmental stewardship.” This source is a goldmine of information about Baltimore county government’s watershed care and sustainability priorities. This source also informs the focus of my installation, i.e., how the project may be in service to specific environmental needs in my community, and a possible location for my installation. This source addresses my essential question re: the concentric impact of power places and energy vortexes on the lives and health of people, animals, insects, plant-life, and other beings? While further researching programs under the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability and watershed management efforts mentioned in the video, I was able to connect with a Natural Resource Specialist in Watershed Management and Monitoring. Ms. Amini has been most helpful in providing me with maps, reports and data on the health and sustainability issues of the stream that borders my developing, which gives me a service focus for my project.

“Watershed Moments: The Pond Down the Road.” Hosted by Ellen Cobler. *Hello Baltimore*

County, produced by Clean Green Baltimore County, *YouTube*, 14, Jan. 2020,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7JgpIBgs5g&feature=youtu.be>

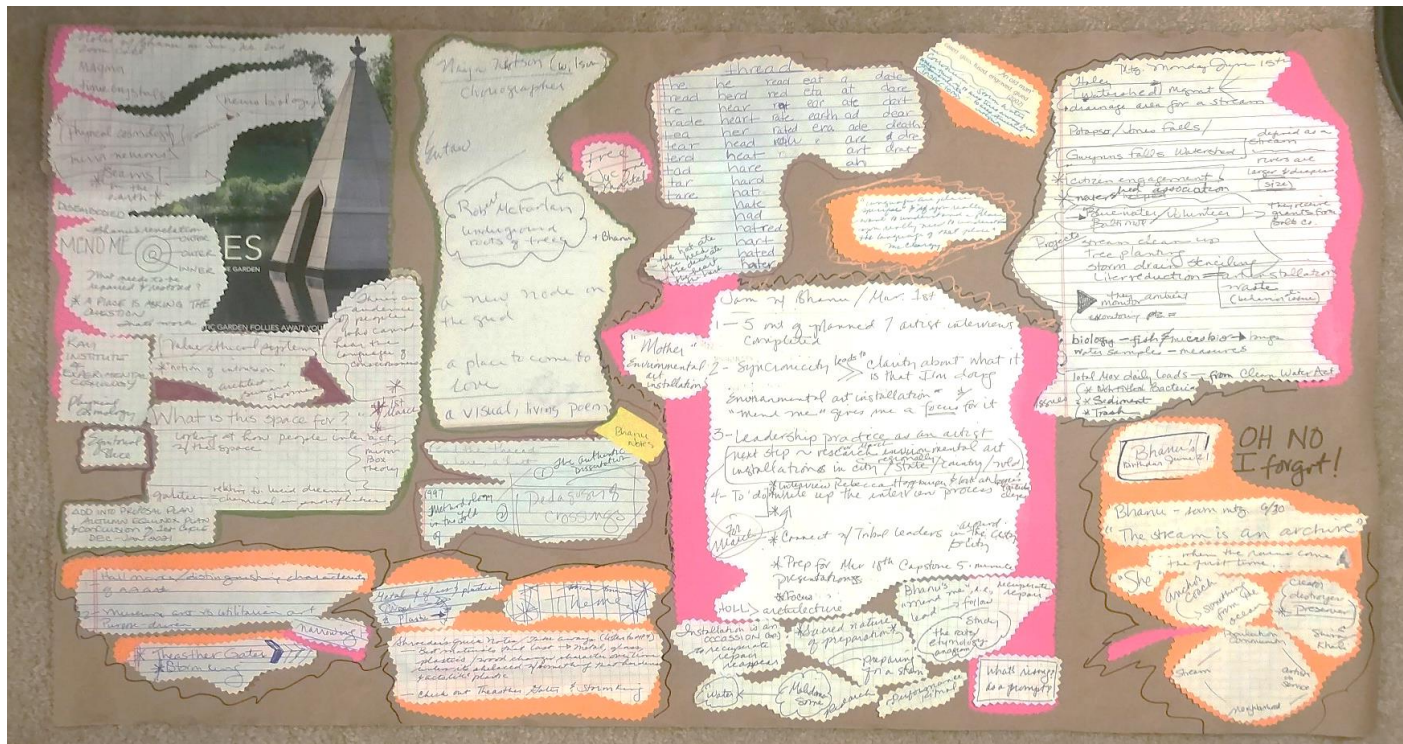
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Yoon, Hong-key. “Chinese Geomancy and Traditional Urban Design.” *Journal of Urban Design*, Dec. 2017, Vol. 22 Issue 6, p. 735-737. 3p.

To fully appreciate the practice of Feng Shui in harmonizing human life with environments, I believe it is important to understand the science underlying the practice: geomancy. In this article, Hong-key Yoon provides a comprehensive definition of geomancy and an historical overview of Chinese geomancy in particular. The article also explains how Feng Shui practitioners, including architects, builders and urban planners, influence “Chinese and other East Asian urban landscapes in determining locations and designs of cities” and regulate “human ecology” in that process. Mr. Yoon is an Associate Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and the author of *The Culture of Fengshui in Korea*. This article further helps to answer my essential question re: What is the concentric impact of power places and energy vortexes on the lives and health of people, animals, insects, plant-life, and other beings?

APPENDIX C:

INTUITIVE PATHWINDING GRAPHIC



From left to right: These notes were taken from conversations with Bhanu Kapil and Haley Amini and include anagram scribblings; thought flashes on paper.

APPENDIX D:
PROJECT IMAGES



Top left: Installation concept design included in proposals to various sources. Bottom left: Beading process work-in-progress. Right: Completed center piece mounted Gwynnvale Park.

Capstone presentation link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llw55rqjhVc&feature=youtu.be>