

Learning Places Fall 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Visit to the Gowanus Canal



Cover Image: This is the end of the Gowanus Canal where it is polluted with pipe waste.

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INTRODUCTION

We went to a trip to visit the Gowanus Canal starting from the end of the canal. The buildings and structures around the canal were mostly storage places and manufacturing facilities. After seeing the canal, myself, I expected the canal to be a lot more polluted than it really is.

SITE OBSERVATIONS: Take notes in your notebook and use those to report your observations

(include photographic documentation and visual notes—at least 3 photographs 2 sketches required -- provide a caption for each image. Also provide a brief explanation why you chose the image and how it is related to the text)



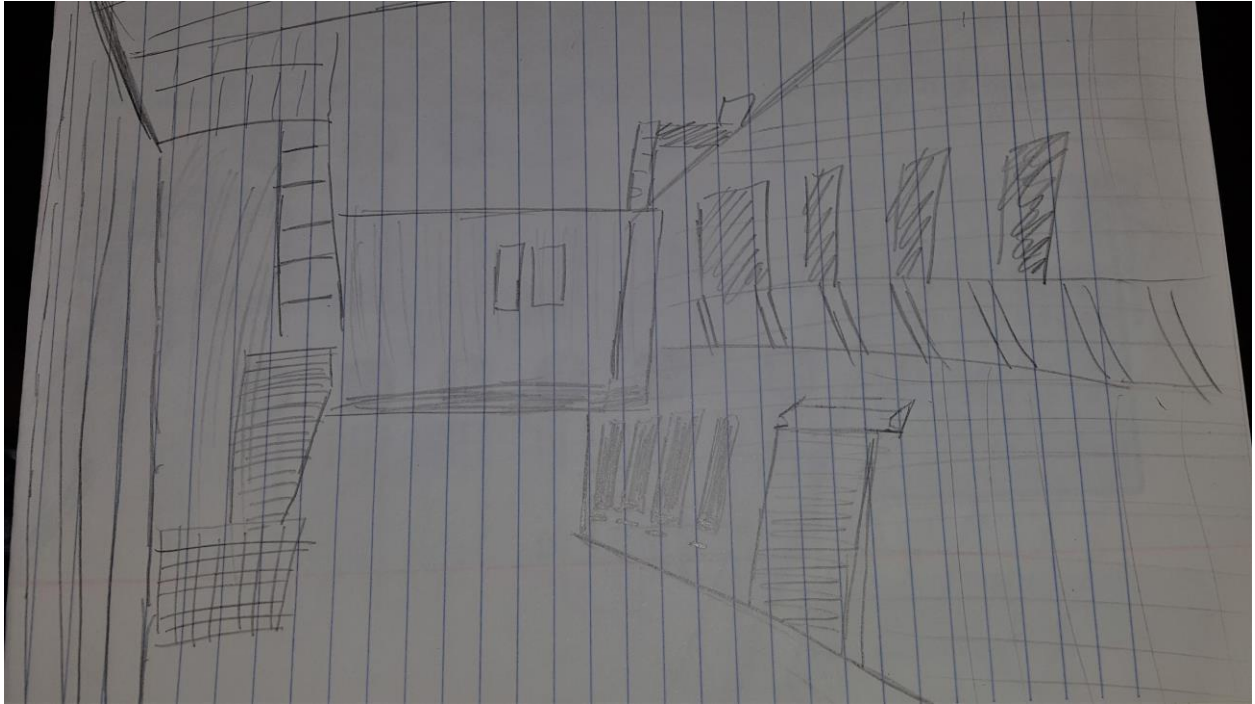
This is an expanded view of the Gowanus canal from the end of the canal. This image shows the conditions of the water and what surrounds it.



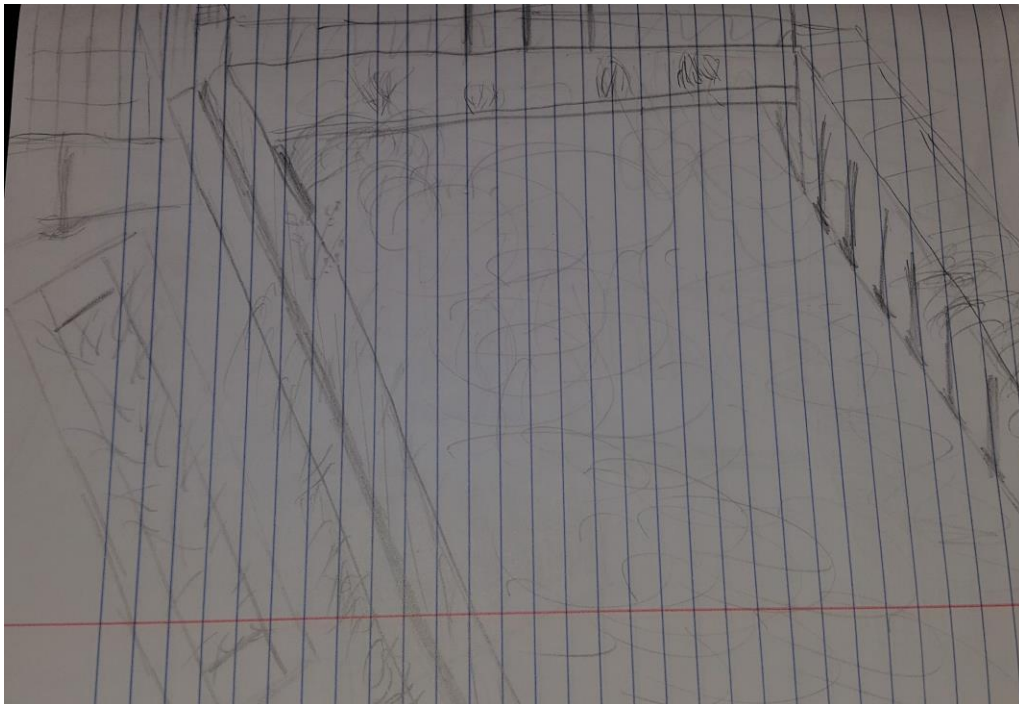
This was taken right next to the Canal and near one of the bridges. Artists are trying to bring a thought of a nice relaxing beach into a viewer's mind.



This is a picture of the place I took when we all stopped to take pictures of this alley with a 1900s theme. The rusty metals and the tin shack looking structure gives us a view of how old the Gowanus really is.



A sketch I made of the alley structures.



A sketch of the Gowanus Canal, the place where we first gathered.

What do you notice about the scale and shape of buildings?

The shapes and the scale of the buildings around the canal were shaped differently. Most of the buildings were not so large in terms of height and were probably around an average of two stories high.

What patterns, textures, colors, and ornamental features of the buildings stand out?

I noticed that many of the buildings around the canal were built with bricks and there is also a pattern where buildings tend to have large windows where pedestrians can look into effortlessly.

Notice and note location of trees and other types of vegetation

There were a decent number of trees around the area. The trees are spread apart from each other like all the other trees of New York. Most of the trees are away from the canal with most being near the buildings of the place. Fuzzy plants and ferns were the majority of the vegetations around the canal. From what I saw, I felt that the place didn't have enough flowers. With the canal being restored slowly, more vegetation will soon be able to thrive near the canal.

What are the functions of different buildings and spaces in this place? Does the place include residential, commercial, or industrial sites? Are there stores, restaurants, cafes? Are there public spaces like public squares or parks? Areas where people can get together? Seating?

From the experience that I've gained from the trip, on the sides of the canal are mostly made up of storage and manufacturing facilities. A few blocks away from the canal we start to see more residential apartments or apartment houses with many trees within the block. There are stores around the place but not many public spaces such as parks where people can get together. During the entire session of the trip, we've passed only one place where we could take a minute rest.

Does this place seem planned or organic? How do the structures and buildings in this place interact with or disrupt the natural environment?

The buildings right next to the canal give out this abandoned vibe where it makes it seem like everything is dead. Being at the place, I was brought back into a documentary where there was a person who was lost in a city that is abandoned and couldn't find his way out. There are some visible changes around the canal as soon as I met up with the rest of the crew. The visible changes involved benches for sitting and concrete lots for growing plants.

What people occupy the space and how do they interact with the environment? Is this place crowded?

Walkable? Easy to navigate?

The people that occupy the space are probably small private companies that want a large area for storage. I feel like they don't really care much about the canals condition since people are just constantly driving in and out of the desolated buildings. The place is not crowded and that is proven by how little we had to make way for people to pass by since we were a large group. The place is extremely easy to navigate since it is not much different than any other New York City street.

What is your personal experience of the place? Think about sound/smell/touch, your body's movement, contact with the ground and physical comfort - how does the place make you feel?

When I first arrived at the location in which we were told to meet at, I felt pretty good about the place until I saw how dirty the water was. The water was foaming with toxins and produced a stench that was uneasy for the nostrils. Although the water was dirty, I was imagining how nice and perfect the place would be if it wasn't all dirty and had people strolling up and down the canal with their little rowing boats. I realized that as soon as we reached the place where the canal was being filtered out by oysters, the water where the oysters are located is so much cleaner and had no existence of stench. I honestly believe that the oyster project will bring life back to the Gowanus canal for all to enjoy.

ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

Use this section to analyze the observations you've noted. What conclusions can you draw about this place and the people who live and work here? What inferences can you make about how the place has changed throughout history and how it might change in the future? How is this place like or different from the places surrounding it? What does this place tell us about Brooklyn? About New York City in general? What is the Genius Loci, or spirit, of this place?

KEYWORDS/ VOCABULARY (these might include specialized vocabulary, city agencies, names of businesses or people *5 keywords minimum required per site visit)

1. Oysters
2. Conservancy
3. Bridges
4. Pottery
5. Venice

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH (these should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project; do not include questions you can answer with a quick google search)

1. Can the Gowanus Canal be used for something of use?
2. Will the water of the Gowanus canal be habitable for sea life?
3. What are the pumps pumping out and how can we stop further damage?