

Searching for the Artists in Gowanus

ARTS GOWANUS

ARTS GOWANUS PRESENTS

GOWANUS OPEN STUDIOS
2017 OCTOBER 21-22

300+ Artist Studios open Sat + Sun, noon-6pm



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event listings at:
www.artsgowanus.org

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10.23.17

INTRODUCTION AND PRE-VISIT REFLECTIONS

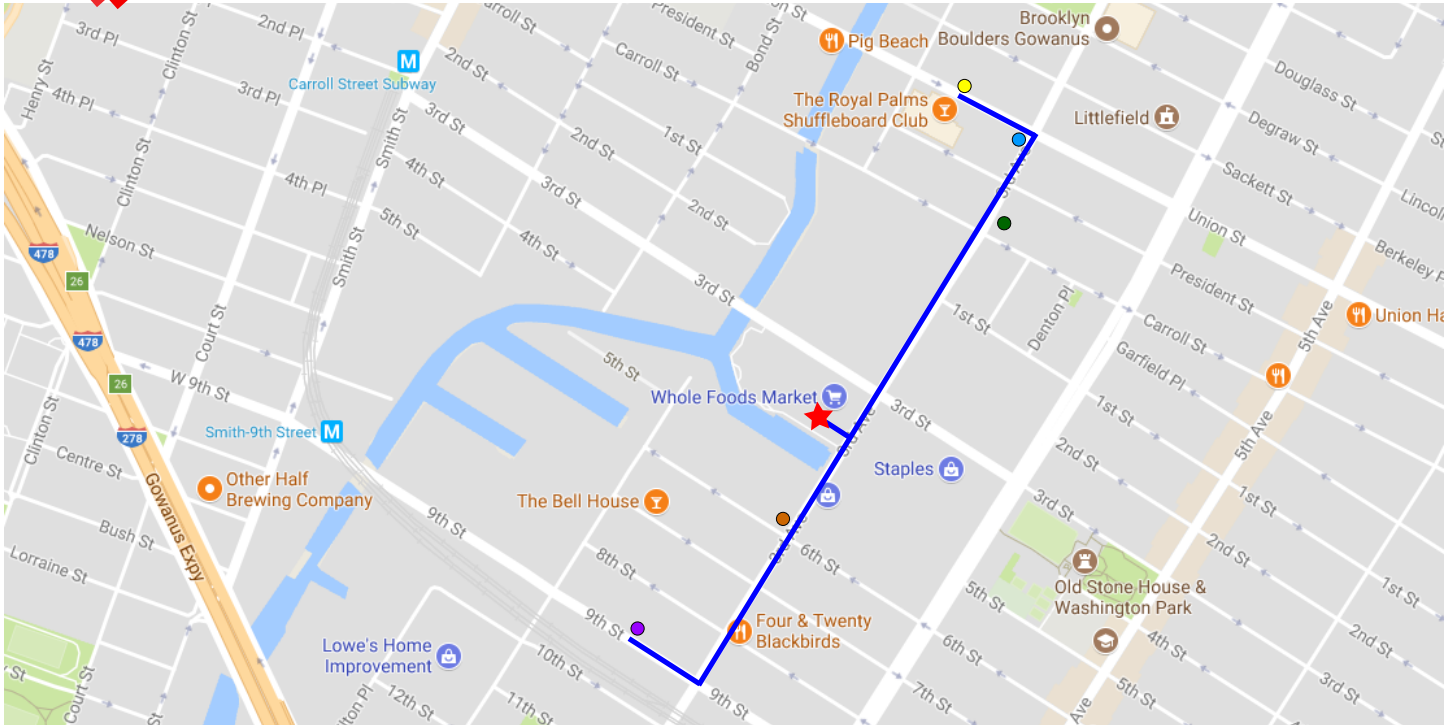
Prior to the site visit the class split into groups, I chose the art and artists in Gowanus. After picking the topic the next step was to research all the studios in Gowanus. Then, my group and I will go to Gowanus and talk with the artists. Before heading out to Gowanus, we created a set of questions to ask the artists. The topic related to the artists in Gowanus calls my attention because one of the way that people expresses their feelings about a specific topic is through art. Aside from expressing themselves through art I became interested how they interpret them and what are the different opinions being portrayed.

SITE DOCUMENTATION

We first started to walk towards 3rd Ave. and walked up to Union Street to go to the Gowanus Souvenir Shop. We wanted to start there because the Gowanus Shop sells art work from various artist from Gowanus. When we arrived there, we noticed the variety diverse types of artwork. There were t-shirts, there was jewelry, cup, jars, and many more pieces. There was a painting where they were showcasing "Canal no. 5 Gowanus" bottle. There were also postcards promoting a beautiful clean Gowanus. There was also a coffee cup saying, "Fuck Developers" and many other negative things towards the developers. We spoke to the owner of the shop and asked her "What is your opinion on rezoning?" she then said "Well I live and work in Gowanus. As a resident, rezoning will be bad for me because that means the rent will double and I would have to find a new place. As a business owner, rezoning will benefit the business because wealthier people will come to the neighborhood and come to the shop." Her answer was very interesting because it will benefit her business but affect her home.

The second step was going back down 3rd Avenue and go to 9th Street and walk towards the train station to see the rest of the studios. Unfortunately some of the studios were closed to the public and others were still not open, so we didn't get too see much. There were many studios down 3rd Avenue ...

- Twig- 287 3rd Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11215
- Autism- 256 3rd Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11215
- Resist- 400 3rd Ave #3, Brooklyn, NY 11215
- Brooklyn Solarworks Canopy- 200 6th St, Brooklyn, NY 11215
- Gowanus Souvenir Shop- 567 Union St, Brooklyn, NY 11215
- ✖ Starting Point



Due to many studios being closed on our site visit, Gowanus has an annual Open Studio event. The Open Studios event is where approximately 300 studios open their doors to the public. The people can visit the studios and speak to the artists.

The first stop was 313 Butler St, Brooklyn, NY 11217, where most of the artists work will be showcased for sale. When I arrived to the studio there was a lot of amazing pieces. Inside this studio there were more studios. The studios varied, some sculptures, watercoloring, felt clothing and paintings.

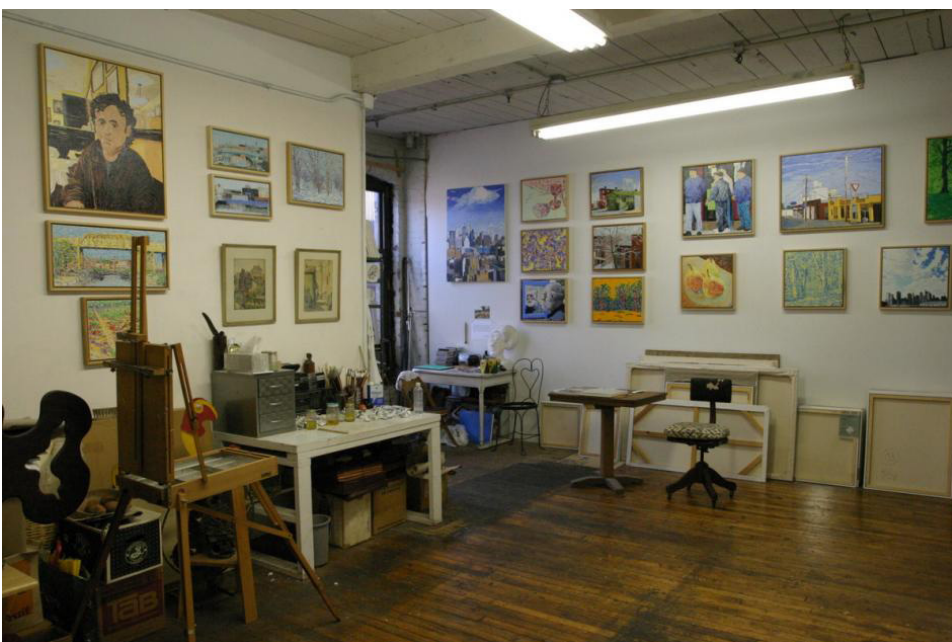


I visited the Pottery Studio owned by Paola Case Borgatta and Yumiko Kuga. We couldn't speak to the artist there. So, we moved to the next place which is a building of about 5 stories. The building is full of studios, but what called my attention about this building was that the artists bought off the building together. The reason why the artists did this was because they didn't want to get kicked out in the future, because they knew developers might come and try to remove them from Gowanus.

I spoke to various artists there. One artist that I spoke to was Elizabeth O'Reilly who works with watercolors. Her watercolors are inspired by the Gowanus bridges, and she loves to paint them. The watercolors are small. I spoke to Ms. O'Reilly and she is one of the owners of the building. She's been working there for around 25 years and when I asked her what does she think about the developers and the rezoning she said, "it's sad they took 3 blocks for a 12- story residential building. "She was referring to 365 Bond Street. Residential home. She also said she dislikes the fact that they are trying to change Gowanus. Ms. O'Reilly says she enjoys crossing the bridges and water coloring them. Is one of the things she enjoys doing because is the essence of Gowanus.



I later spoke to Joseph Burchfield, who is a Contemporary Painter. I am not sure if he owns his studio but he has been working there for about 12 years. I also asked Mr. Burchfield what was his opinion on the developers and the gentefrication. He also mentioned that "365 Bond is just a block" he said that is very unfortunate that they are trying to change Gowanus. That they are trying to put high rise buildings and try to change it to residential, when is a commercial and industrial district. He also had some of his artwork inspired by Brooklyn and Gowanus.



ANALYSIS:

After concluding the Site Visit and the Open Studios Event I noticed that all the artists disagree with the rezoning process. They all are against the developers trying to make the neighborhood a residential zone when its originally an industrial zone. They all shared the same opinion regarding the 365 Bond residential building. They all agree that is a massive building that doesn't fit in the community. Which makes it stand out because it looks like it doesn't belong. The building is very expensive and only a very wealthy person can live there. The rent starts at roughly \$4,000 monthly. So, if the developers continue to build luxurious apartments, the rents will go sky rocket high and then the existing residents will have to part away. They are the ones who give Gowanus the spirit they have.

The artists all have worked hard to obtain their studio space. Some of them have been moving from place to place. Not all artists are inspired by the Gowanus Canal when making their art pieces. But they all share the same feeling when it comes to Gowanus. They all picked Gowanus for some specific reason. Some of them chose it because a few years back it was very cheap to rent a studio there. But others just like the spirit of Gowanus. To artists, Gowanus is not just a place, is their home is where their career began. Is where they built their art pieces. Is where they enjoy doing their art. Is not just a job is a home.

As you walk around in Gowanus you will see many murals. Some of them for funding's but others just to express their feelings. The colors and shapes that are painted on those walls have given life to Gowanus. And the painters are al artists that deserve to be respect and not get kicked out their studios.

KEYWORDS/ VOCABULARY

1. Genius Loci
2. 365 Bond residential building
3. Rezoning
4. Open Studios Event
5. Redevelopment

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

1. What are the characteristics that makes Gowanus special?
2. If you can come to an agreement with the developers on how to benefit from the Rezoning or Gentrification would you? And how?
3. Do you think artists are responsible for the beginning of gentrification in a neighborhood? If yes, why? And can you prevent it?