

Learning Places Summer 2019

# SITE REPORT #1

## The Gowanus Canal



In the Gowanus canal, sludge and environmental pollution can be seen from this photo taken in 2012.

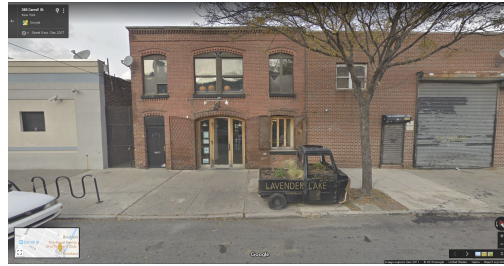
**Johnson Noel:**

### SITE OBSERVATIONS

Insert 3 photographs and provide a *creative* title for each image. The title should be a word or short phrase that suggests a theme or conceptual association related to the photo.



## Upscale



## Creative Reuse



## History

1. What are some general observations about the character of this neighborhood? What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel?

Walking around the neighborhood of Gowanus was amazing because you can really feel a sense of history from the sidewalks, the houses, the spacious streets, and the trees. Houses in the area shared similar colors and looked upscale when compared to other neighborhoods. There wasn't anything really modern about the houses, and the sidewalks were filled with stones instead of cement, so it felt like the neighborhood was trapped in the distant past. Walking down Carroll Street, we saw Lavender Lake, a restaurant that used to be a stable for horses. The design of the restaurant reminds me of the 1800s. Carroll Street made me feel like I was at an exhibit, with its rich history.

2. How is the natural world contained or shaped by human activity or architecture in Gowanus? In what ways does the natural world invade or disrupt human activity or architecture in Gowanus?

The natural world around Gowanus is heavily encouraged. It was designed so that there could be trees and gardens around the houses in the area in order to signify class. There are instances where you feel like the natural world do invade the neighborhood. Since the sidewalk was made from slabs of rocks instead of cement, you would sometimes notice plants/grass protrude from the cracks. The canal, which used to be a creek can also be viewed as some kind of disruption in the area because then you need to go over a bridge to get on the other side. And when it rains the canal overflows, it really smells.

3. What people did you observe in the neighborhood and what activities are they engaged in?

In the neighborhood, people are mostly doing their own things, but when you get closer to the industrial side of the area, you can see workers in the candle factory making candles.

4. Reflect on a **specific** space you viewed in this neighborhood: Lavender Park Restaurant

a. who was the space designed for and what is its general purpose?

The space was designed for people who appreciate the history of Gowanus. Also, anyone that wants to eat can stop by. I feel like the design wasn't changed because the owners wanted to preserve that historic look.

b. what are the implied rules of this **specific** space? How are people meant to interact with one another and with the environment?



The area is a residential area, so you can walk through when you are on your commute. There are no benches outside so it's not meant for gathering. On the inside, there are tables for small groups and tables for individuals. Its slightly dark and candles are ignited on the tables, so it gives off a very chill vibe. Since the restaurant is relatively small, I would think that inside voices are encouraged when interacting with someone else.

c. Describe a possible creative reuse of this **specific** space for a theatrical event:

This would be a great space to have a performance that focuses on war and the community. The theme of this war could be about space or territory. The bridge nearby would serve as a symbol that represents different zones, so once you cross over the bridge, you know that you are in a different territory. This war could be set in the 1800s.

- a) Which areas are best for actors and which areas are good for observers? Do these spaces overlap? Mention specific objects and structures in your answer.

The restaurant would be best suited for the observers and the outside would be suited for the actors on both sides of the bridge. The windows could be bigger so that the audience could get a good view of what's taking place on the outside. The restaurant can also be a great stage for the actors to come in and have a meal while discussing the war they are involved in.

- b) Describe the potential audience. Who are they (workers? inhabitants? recreational users? tourists?) and why would they be passing through? Where are they going and where did they come from?

The audience would mostly be tourists and recreational users. The tourists could be people that are just interested in being immersed in a theatrical event that relates to history. The event could be maybe once a year, with different sites to visit, but the main reason to come to the event is to appreciate the history of Gowanus and pay respect to those that paved the way for the next generation. Passing through the site, the audience would get a look at the Gowanus canal or creek, then head over to the other side of the bridge where the theme might be a little different to signify changing of zones. These people could be coming from a museum, where they booked the ticket for the event or they could be coming from their homes. I imagine this even could be an all weekend thing for the neighborhood.

- c) Discuss how light and sound would support a theatrical event.

Lights and sounds play a big role in invoking certain feelings into the audience. For war, the area can be dark with small glimmers of lights in different areas. The sound would be intense so that the audience understand what's going through the soldier's minds. There could be a marching band playing to rally and motivate the soldiers and give off a sense of pride.

- d) What kinds of performance would work best (intimate or grand; processional or stationary; text and/or music; interactive or passive audience; etc.)?

For this event, an intimate performance would work best so that the observers can be more immersed. It would also have to be processional so that things slightly change when crossing over the bridge. Text and music would be welcomed. The text could give a background of the war, and would give insight to what led up to the war. I think the audience should be passive.

**QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. Write down questions that require further research to answer.** 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. **Question?** What would be the cost to fix the Gowanus Canal?
2. **Question?** What are some effective ways to clean up the Gowanus canal and fix the sewage system? And what are examples of sewage systems around the world that we can learn from?
3. **Question?** How can we drain or recycle the Gowanus canal?

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and revise one of your research questions for further research.

**Revised Research Question:** What are some innovative ways we can fix/upgrade the sewage system in Gowanus.

Find a book or newspaper article that could help you answer your question.

MLA Citation for source:

**American Iron Steel Institute. Modern Sewer Design. 1st ed. Washington, D.C.: American Iron and Steel Institute, 1980. Print.**

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

I selected this book because it speaks of modern designs for the sewer systems, which would help me answer my question.

Describe the process you used to find this source including any keywords and the search engine or tool you used to search.

I first searched for advanced sewage systems, because I was looking for a better sewage system out there. I ended up getting a bunch of books with just the word advanced in them. Then I removed the advanced word, but then I would get some books with the word systems in them. So I removed the word "systems" to see how many relevant books would pop up using only the word sewage. I got a lot of results but they mostly focused on sewage and what it is. The key change that helped, was changing the keyword from sewage to sewer. Only then, did i get results related to my question.

What other sources or further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for them?

I would need to know the cost of fixing/replacing the sewer system. I would need to know how working on the system would affect the neighborhood. Would those closest to the canal need to relocate while the sewer system is being repaired. Have there been any efforts in the past to fix the sewer system, and what was the result?

To find these answers, I would need to look for articles in the online library database.